

**NOTE:** Members of the ELT could copy and paste the text below into a document or email and send it to their team members prior to the meeting where everyone shares their WHY. However, you would probably want to delete my personal example below.

## WHAT IS YOUR WHY?

*"One who has a why to live for can bear almost any how."*  
-Friedrich Nietzsche

The purpose of this activity is to keep morale high and create a supportive environment during these difficult times. At the meeting, invite each member of your team to share an image with the rest of the group and explain why they chose it. The image should represent your WHY. Your WHY is the drive or motivation behind WHAT you do and HOW you do it.

To learn more about the power of identifying your WHY, check out this Ted Talk from Simon Sinek if you have not already seen it:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

To identify your own, personal WHY and select an image that best represents it, it may be helpful to reflect on the following questions:

- What drives or motivates your life and your work?
- What do you find most satisfying about your work?
- There are plenty of places to earn a living. How does WSDOT's WHY of *"We provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses"* - align with your personal drive or motivations?
- Why are we lucky to have you here? In other words, what unique talents, gifts, passions, and knowledge do you bring to WSDOT?

**Please note:** *This is no time for humility!!! We really need to know what motivates you and makes you so great.*

Once we understand what drives and motivates others, we can better support them, motivate them, and allow their unique gifts and talents to shine. As people share their images during the activity, ask questions and

encourage others to ask questions as well. For instance, you may ask such things as:

- Are you getting to fulfill your purpose here at WSDOT?
- If so, how?
- If not, how can others support you in better fulfilling your WHY at work?
- Are we fully utilizing your greatest gifts and talents?
- If so, how?
- If not, how could we better utilize them?

**EXAMPLE:** If helpful, here is my own image and explanation of my WHY.



**My WHY:** My personal WHY is “Putting Human Nature to Work”

**Explanation:** As social creatures, people yearn for connection and a sense of belonging. We are biologically wired to form groups built on trust, to protect one another, and collaborate to accomplish shared goals. It’s the very reason human beings have survived as a species! After all, we are not the biggest, strongest, or fastest creatures on the planet. Our innate ability to communicate and collaborate is what has enabled us to not only survive but thrive in the world.

Ironically, despite living in today's hyper-connected world, we have never been more isolated, divided, distrustful, and fearful. There are countless, daily examples of dishonest and disingenuous behavior in all industries and segments of society. Sadly, rare is the institution that is truly trustworthy and which can be counted on to consistently deliver on its promises. People are starving for a community they can truly trust. This has led to historically high rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide.

Why shouldn't the workplace be an environment we get to go to every day to experience being part of a community of belonging? For over 20 years, I have been motivated and driven by my passion to help people create organizational environments aligned with the way people naturally perform and relate with one another. In other words, *putting human nature to work!* This not only meets peoples' needs for connection and belonging, it enables those organizations to thrive and accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish together.