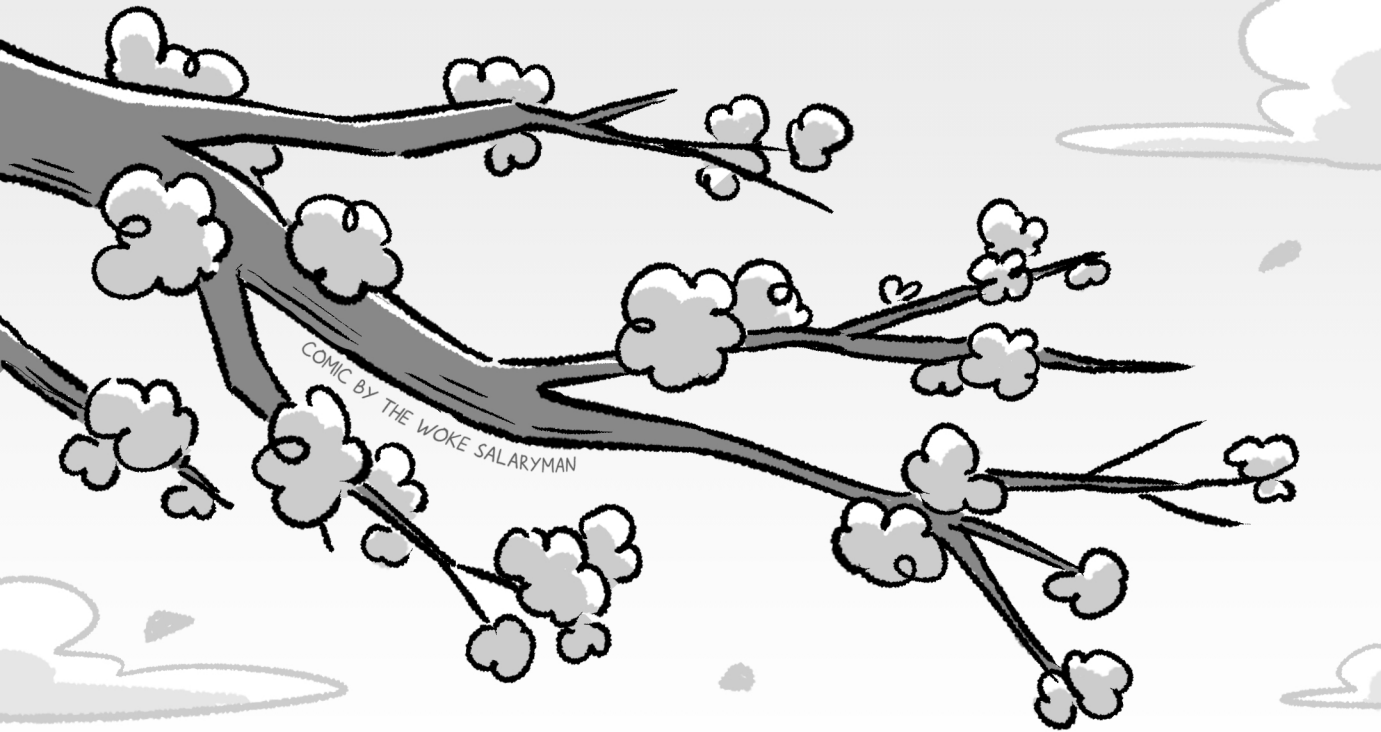


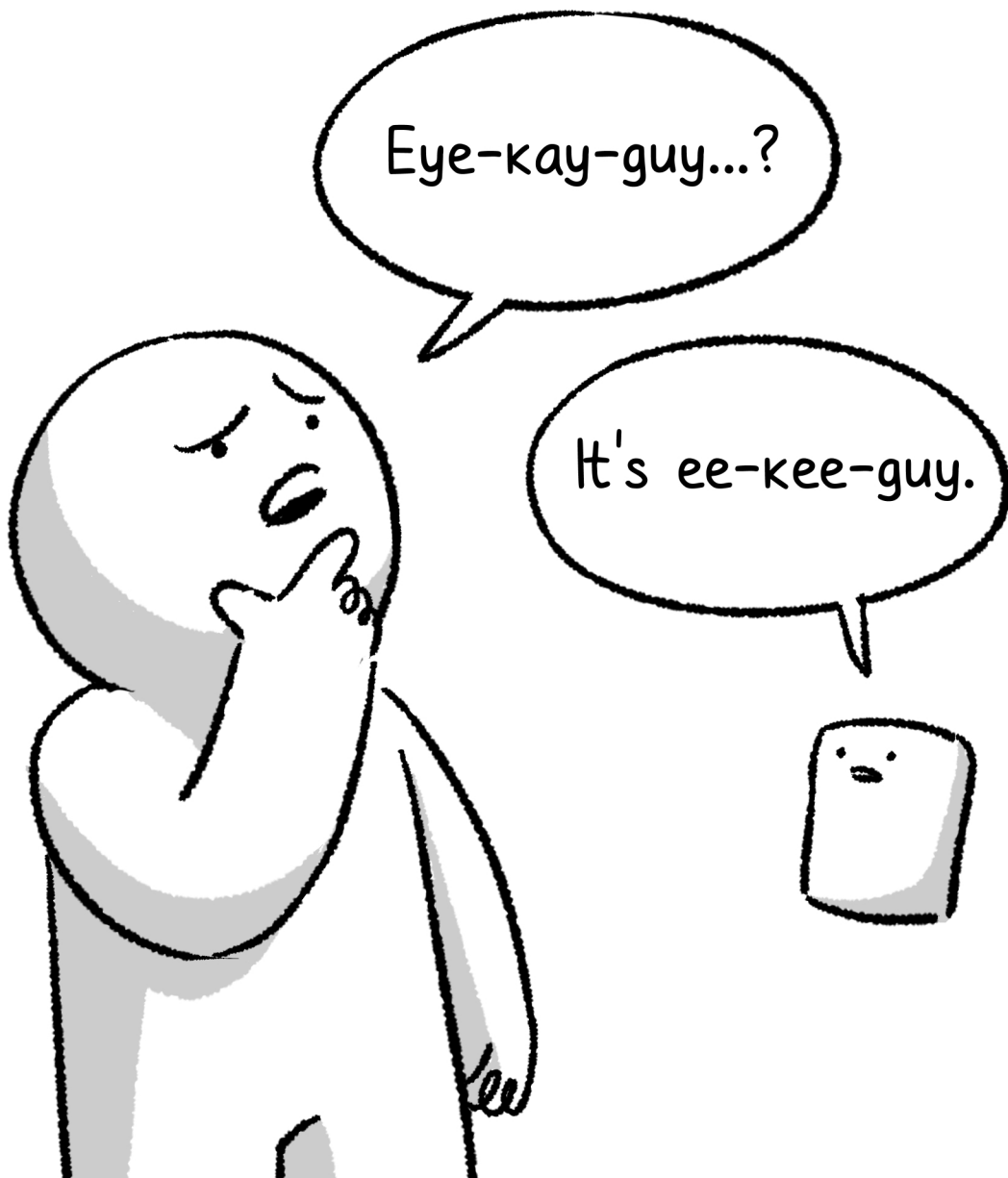
IKIGAI

生き甲斐

"The reason for being"



'Ikigai', a Japanese term, has been popularized in the west and is commonly interpreted as 'the reason for being' or 'the meaning to life'.

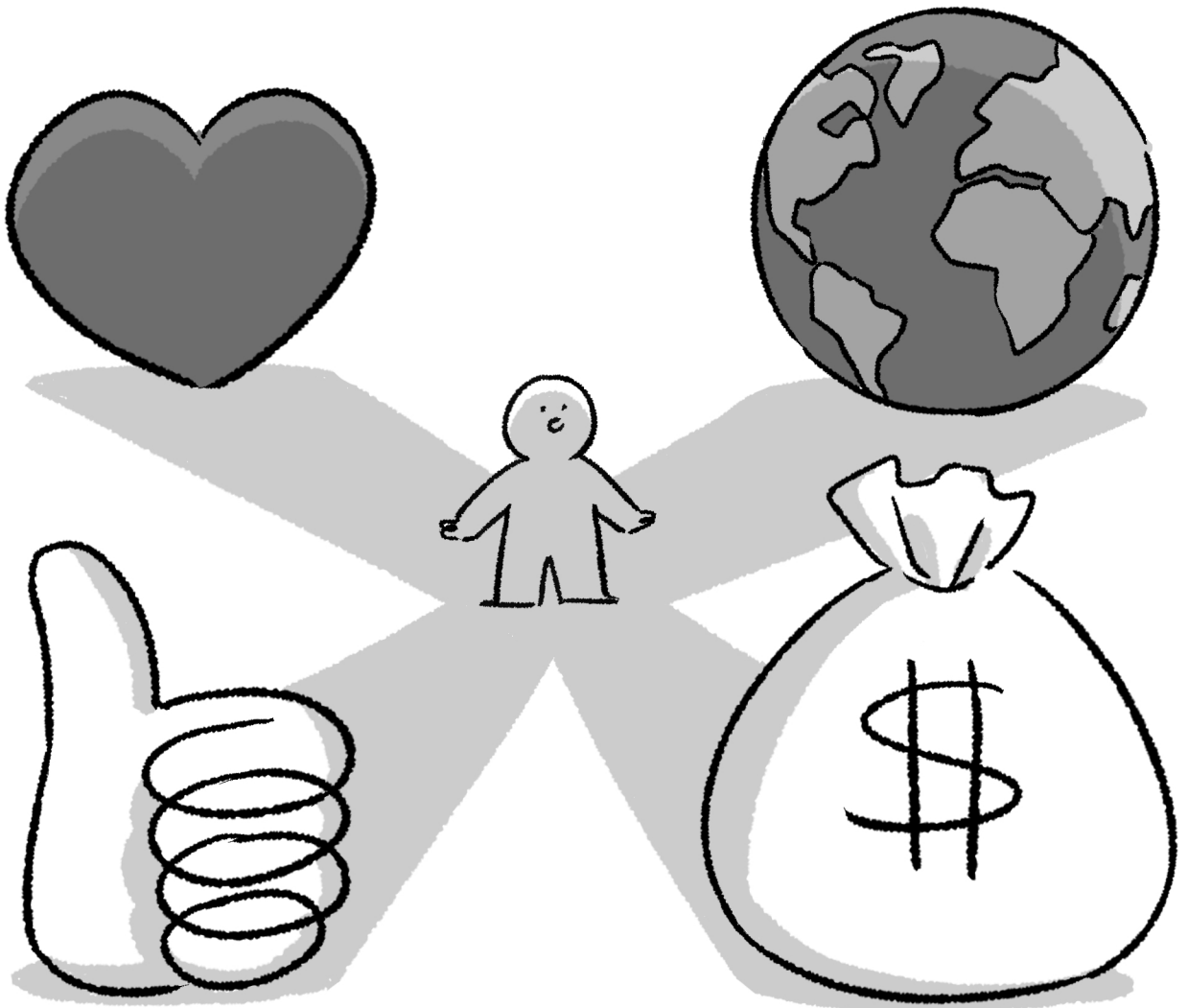


If you've heard of the term 'ikigai', you've probably seen this venn diagram as well, with 'ikigai' at the cross section of these 4 pillars.

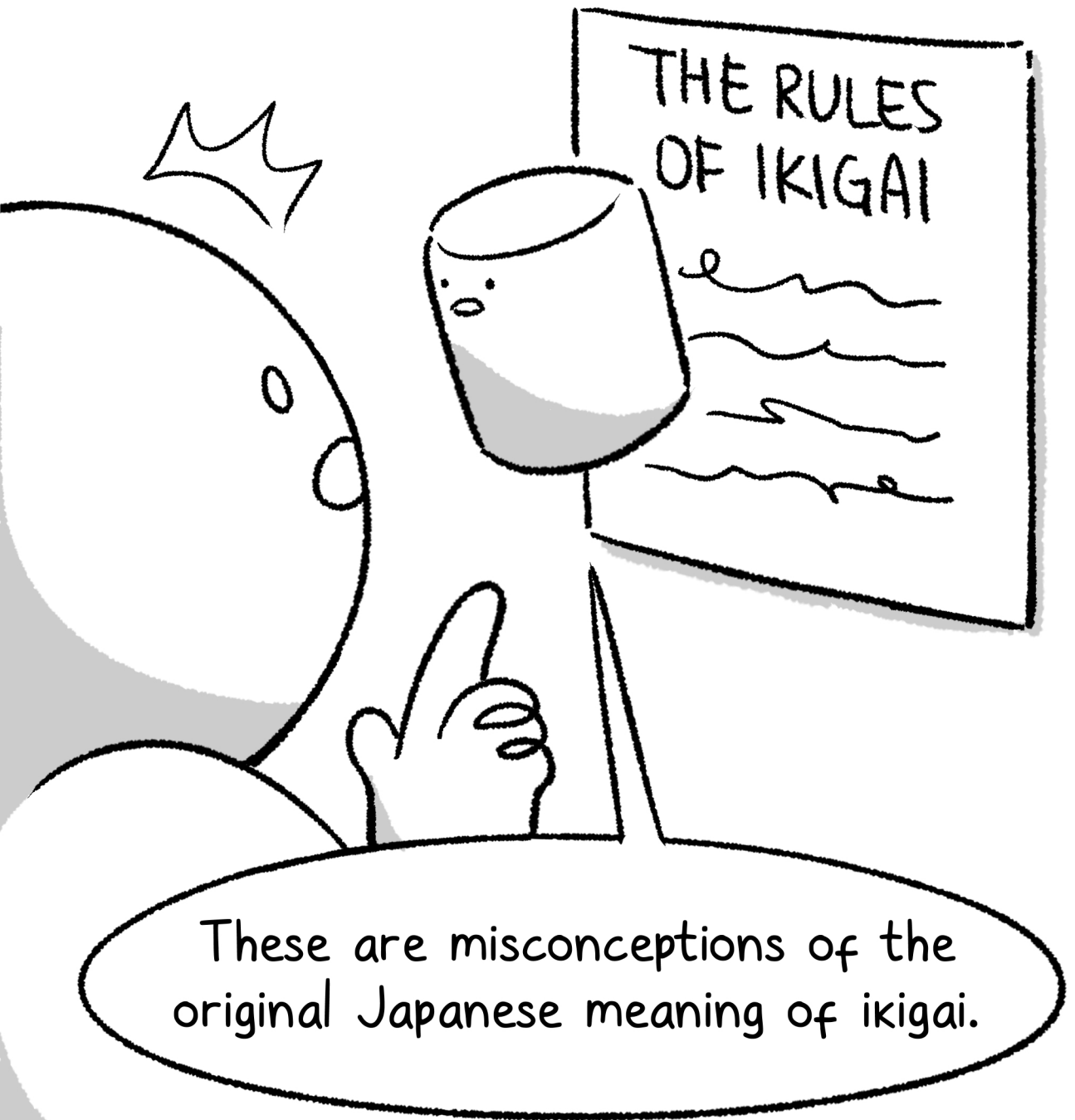


Many books and articles use this to 'teach' people how to 'find their purpose' in life.

However, this diagram implies that all 4 pillars need to be met in order to achieve ikigai.



You may even find something like
'rules of ikigai' or step-by-step guides
to 'finding your ikigai' online.



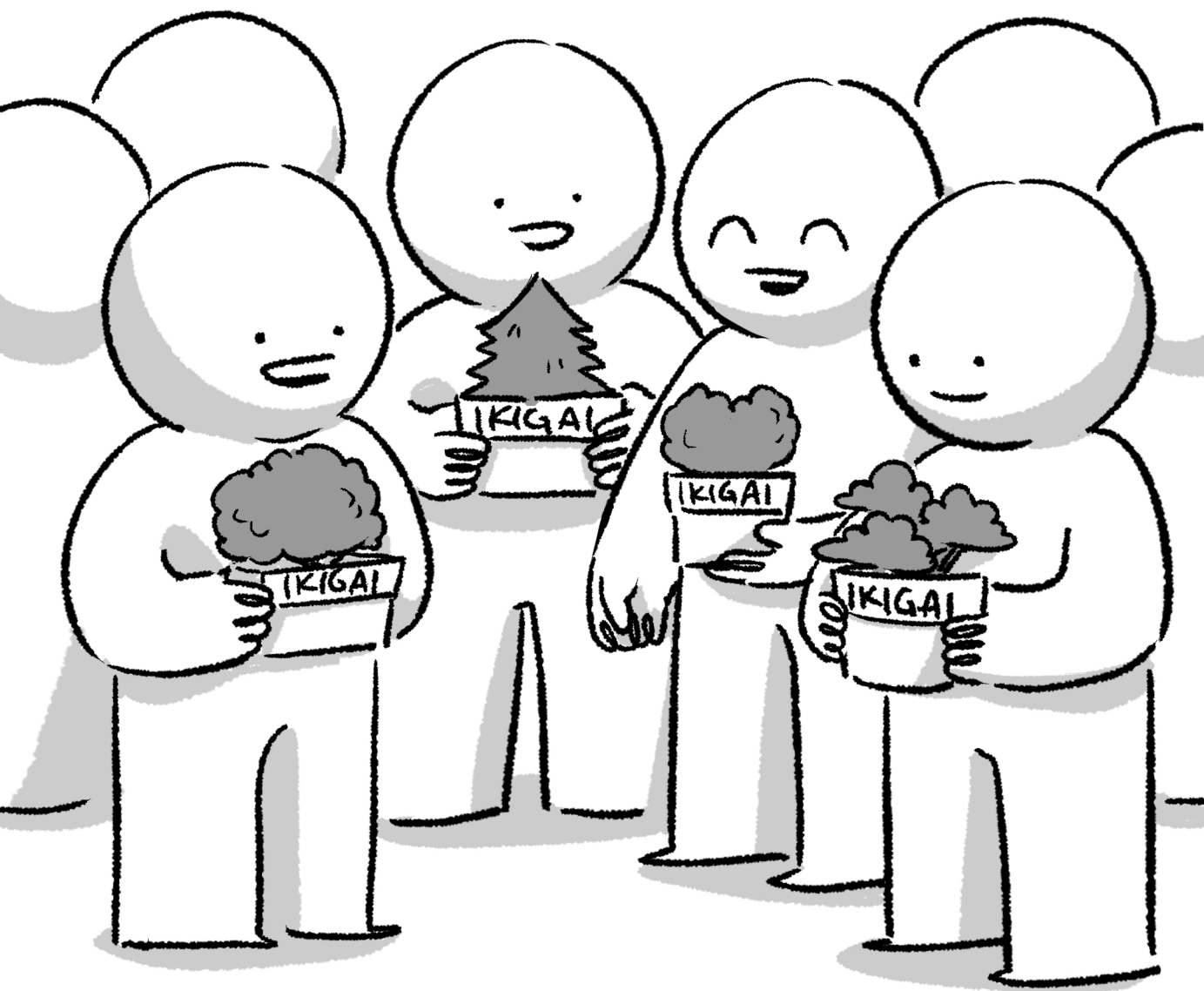
So what is the Japanese meaning of 'ikigai' really?

A common way to use the word 'ikigai' is to express a subjective **feeling**.



To the Japanese, 'ikigai' refers to the things that makes one feel like life's worth living.

Hence, this feeling of ikigai can differ greatly from person to person.

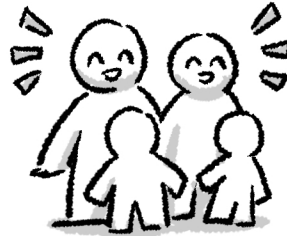


In a 2020 Japanese government survey, elderly aged 60 and above were asked 'When do you feel ikigai?'

The top 5 responses were:

①

Getting together with family



55.3%

②

Eating good food



53.8%

③

Watching TV or listening to the radio



48.5%

④

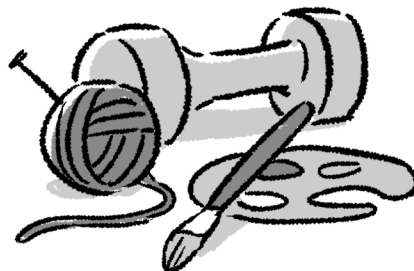
Chatting or having meals with friends or acquaintances



45.5%

⑤

Being passionate about hobbies

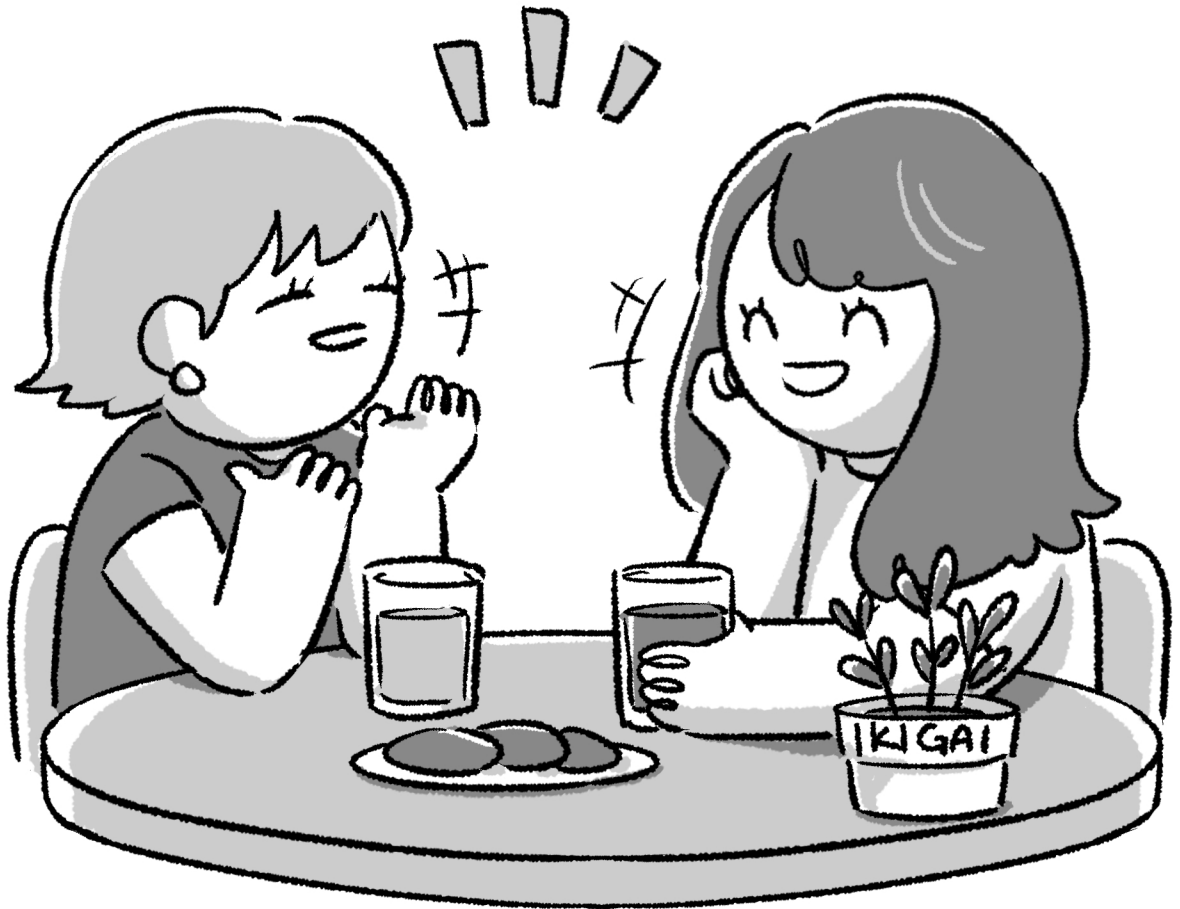


45.3%

Even in a 2010 survey of young Japanese,
work & studies was only 3rd
on the ranks of 'ikigai' at 34.3%,
behind family & pets (49.5%),
and hobbies & leisure (51.2%).



As you can see from the responses, reasons to feel ikigai could be something as simple as a day-to-day occurrence like eating or meeting a friend, the little joys in life.



They need not be something with large-scale purpose like a job that helps society, or making the most productive use of your skills.

'Ikigai' has never been this deep, inspiring,
life-changing concept in Japan.

Only when it got western attention
did it turn into a life purpose
journey or pursuit of happiness.



How did 'ikigai' get popularised in the west?

Scholars were researching areas where the life expectancy of residents was higher than other parts of the world. There, they discovered 'ikigai', which was then associated with longer and improved quality of life.

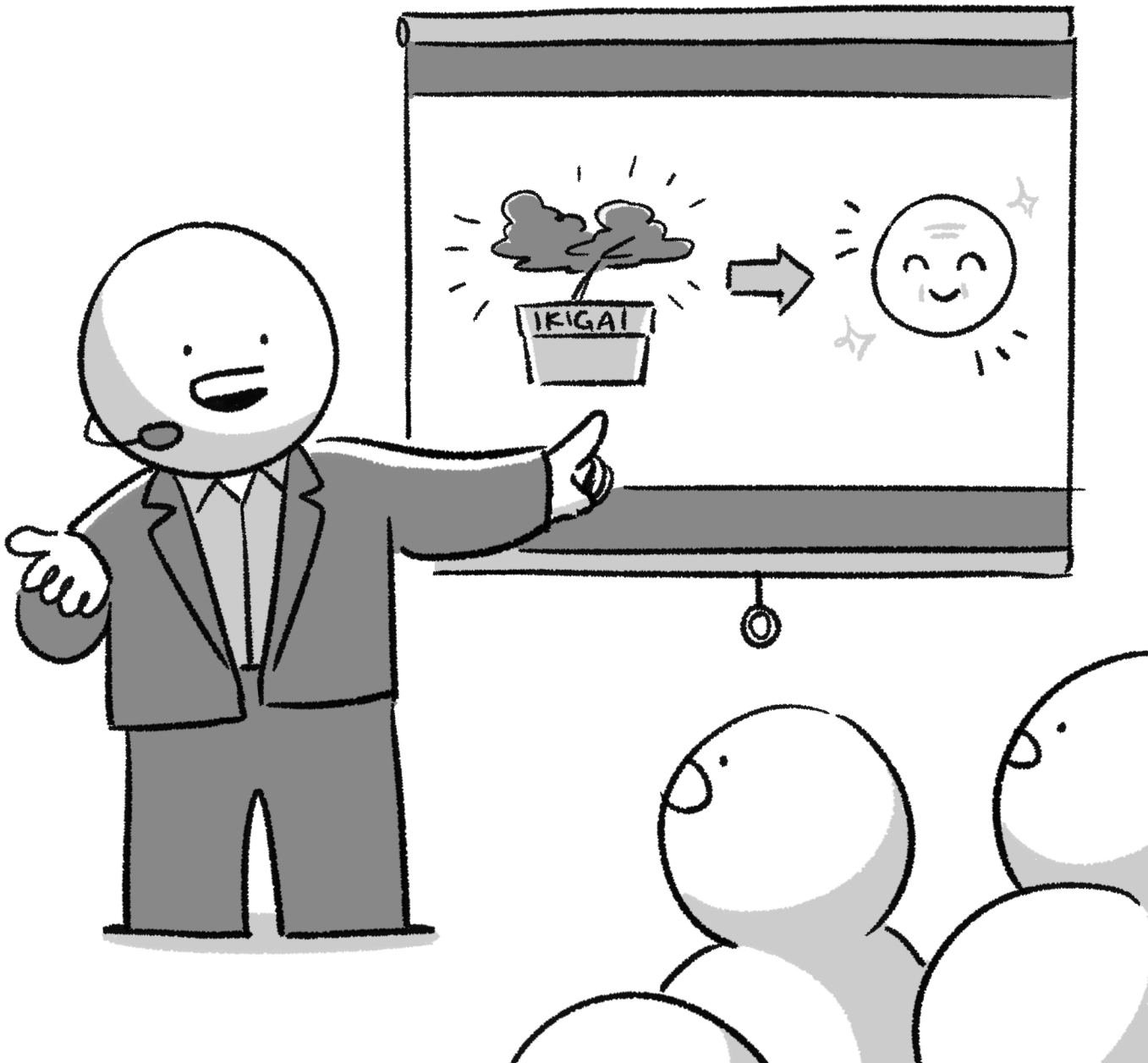


(Okinawa is one of such areas, but is not the origin of 'ikigai', which is another common misconception)

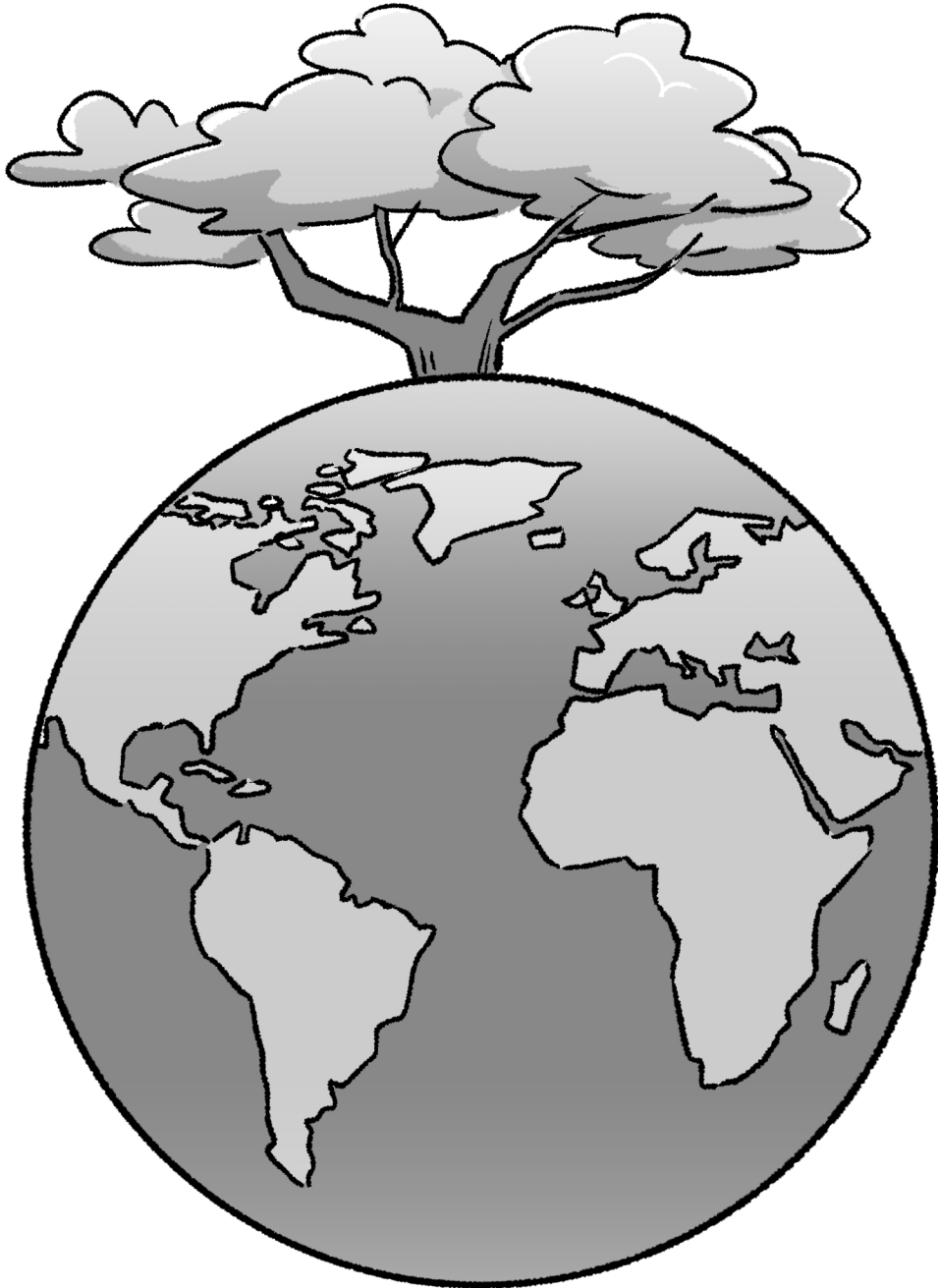
Studies theorized that having something keeping you engaged, focused and satisfied is associated with positive health outcomes.



Hence it led to the boom of 'ikigai' and many wanting to share the concept of 'how to find one's ikigai' in order to lead to more fulfilling and longer lives.



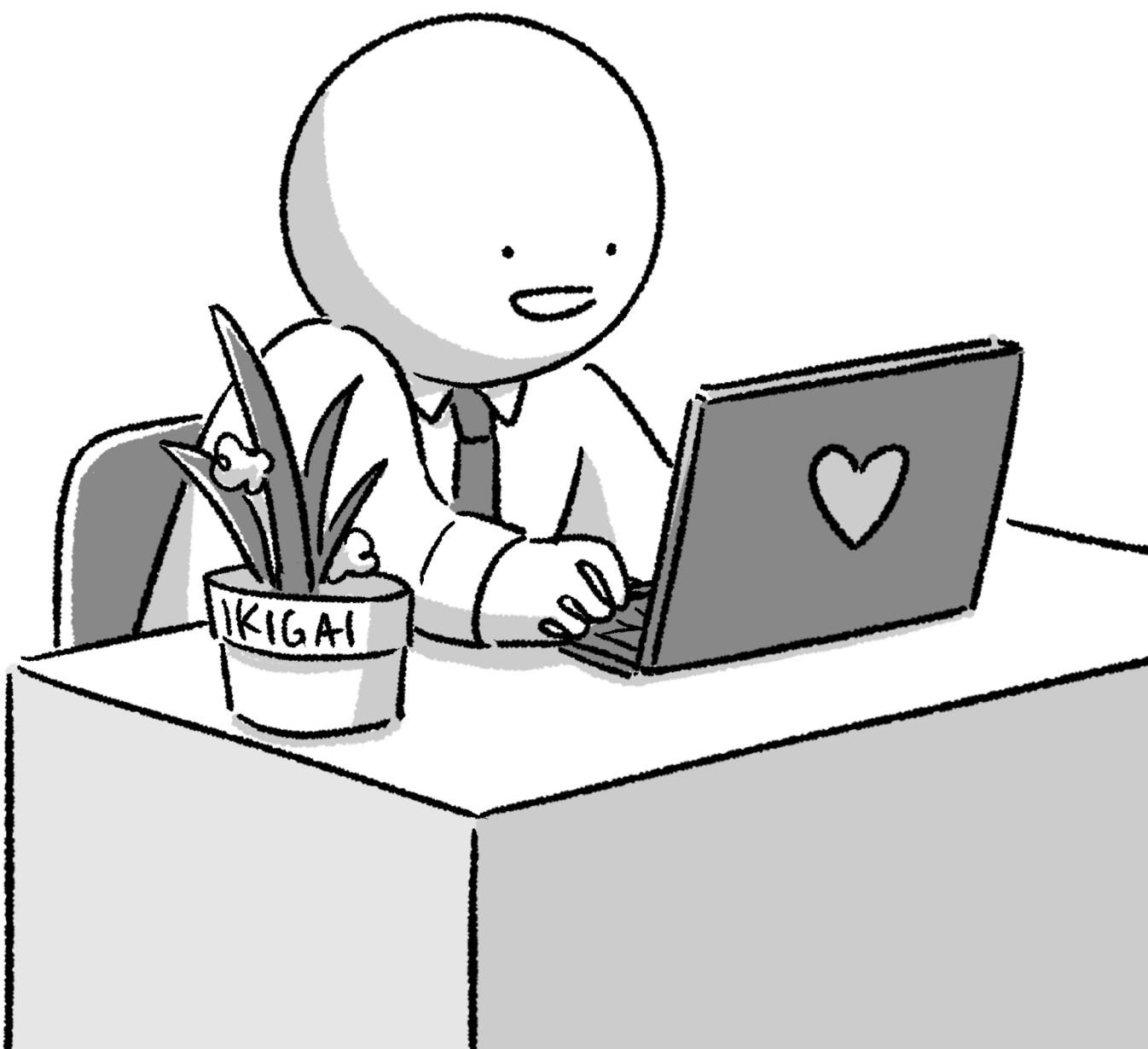
Despite the misconceptions from the original Japanese word, there has been a positive effect of the spread of 'ikigai'.



The venn diagram, while originally an adaptation of 'The Zuzunaga Venn Diagram of Purpose' but rebranded as 'ikigai', is undoubtedly a powerful tool.



Many have been inspired by this new framework of 'ikigai' to actively seek out more purpose in their careers and do meaningful work for the masses.



That in turn leads to greater fulfillment and satisfaction in life, as the individual sees the value they bring to the world through their skills and things they enjoy.



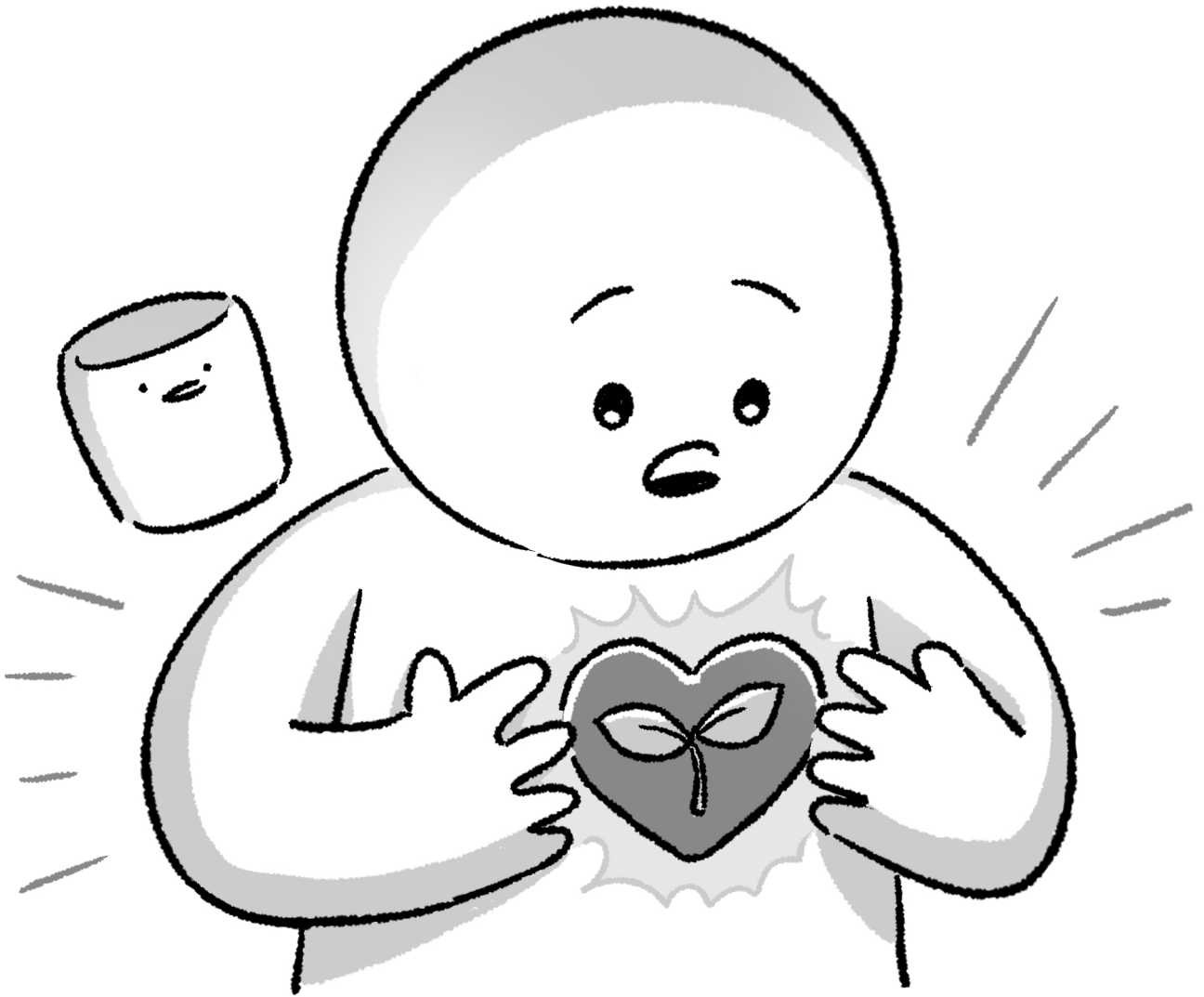
But on the flip side, some others worry or feel pressured about being unable to find their ikigai.

I enjoy my hobby,
but I don't know how
to turn it into my
career or use it
to help society...

I don't know my purpose
and direction in life...I'm
never gonna find my ikigai!



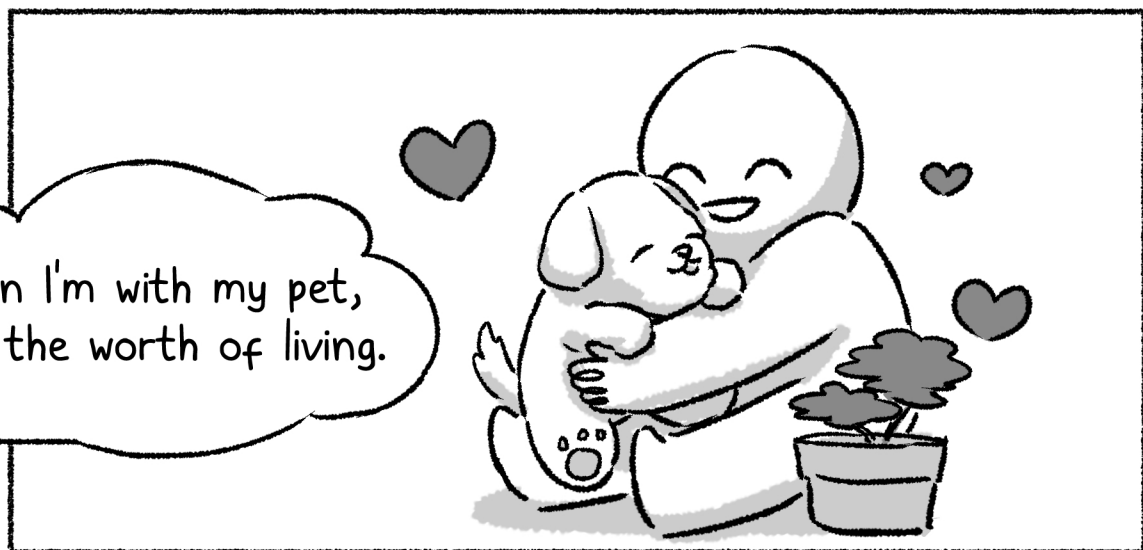
But remember, 'ikigai' was never meant to be something that deep.



'Ikigai' is something personal. It can be something small. You can have many. As long as in that very moment, it makes you feel at ease.



When I look at beautiful
sunsets and scenery,
I feel the worth of living.



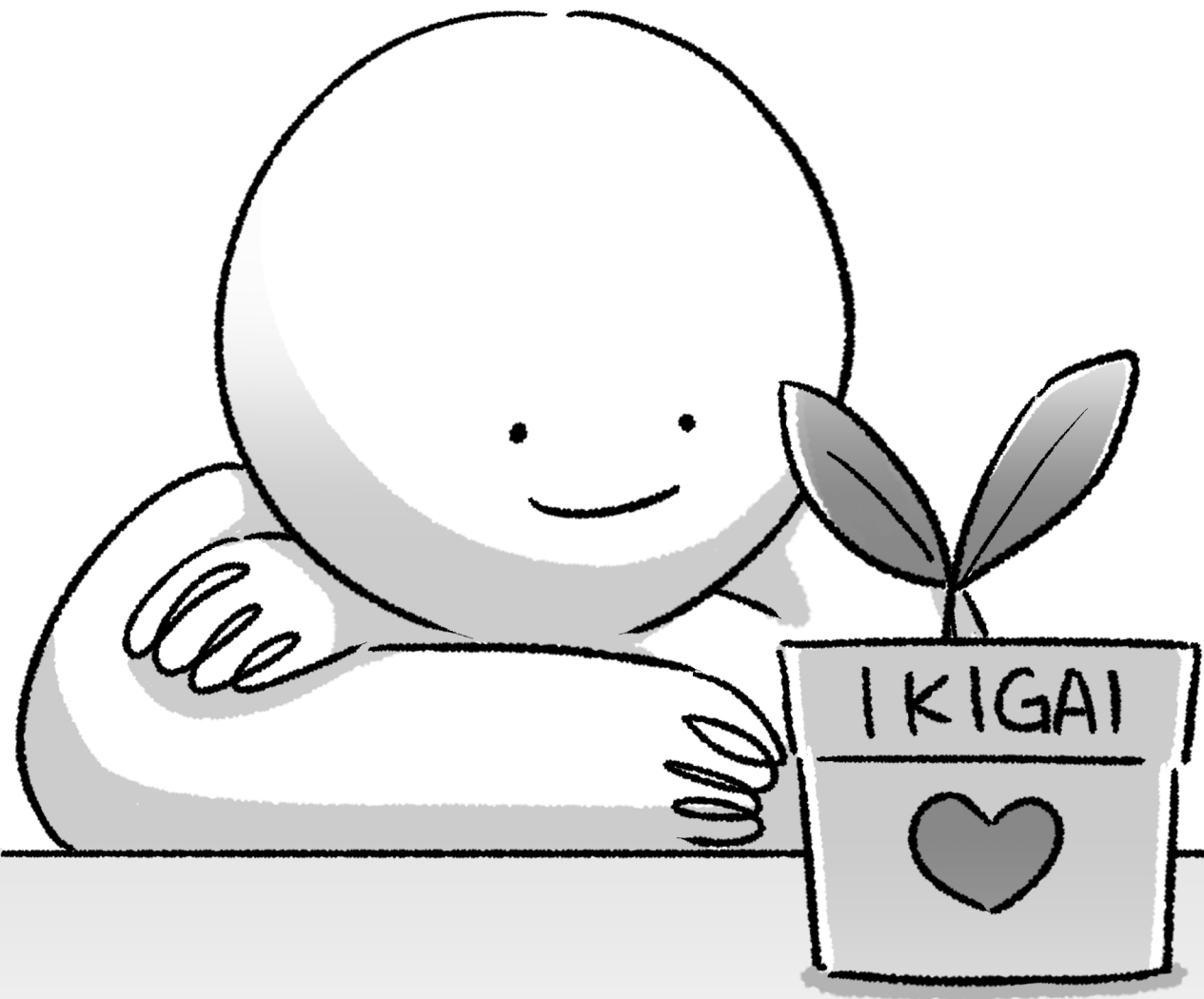
When I'm with my pet,
I feel the worth of living.



When I listen to music,
I feel the worth of living.

If you managed to make your
profession your ikigai, that's great.

But if not, it's equally as valid an ikigai too.
All that matters is that it's **your** ikigai.



When you feel overwhelmed in this big world,
or pressured to find greater purpose in life,
remember that it could just be the little things
that makes life worth living.

Stay woke, salaryman.

