

How to search for meaning within the limitations of life?

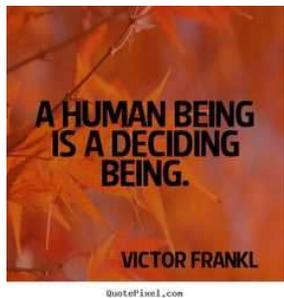
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Abstract

All human beings have limitations in life. To find meaning in life within the limitations of our life is not an easy task. But successful people are those who found this meaning in life within their limitations, defining their own freedom, choosing their attitude towards their life, and willingly accepting the purpose and meaning in life.

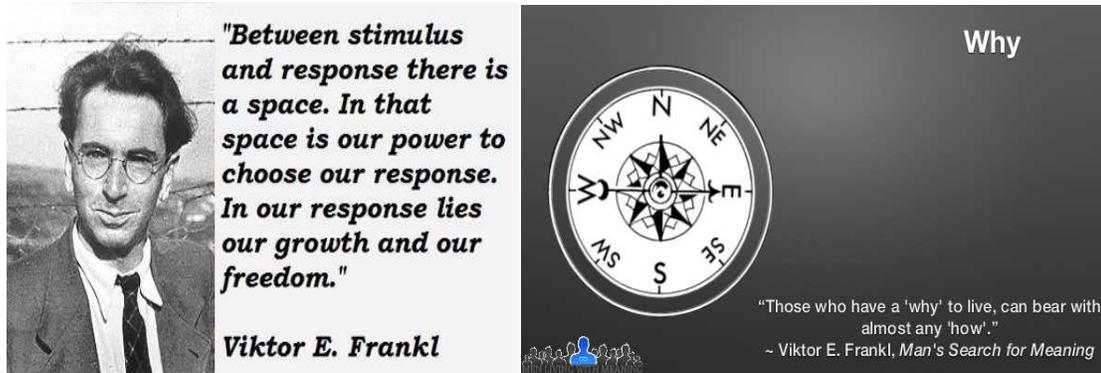
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“Logotherapy ...focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man’s search for such a meaning” – Man’s Search for Meaning, 2008, p.104

To have a sense of meaning and purpose extends life. Higher aspirations keep human beings motivated to move on. When the fellow prisoners wanted to run into the electric fence in order to kill themselves, with the thought that there was nothing more to expect from life, Victor Frankl turned around saying “Do not ask what you expect from life; ask what life expects from you!” Frankl clearly understood that it is not suffering itself that causes despair, rather the feeling that you have nothing to give and no one to love or nothing to live for!

A victim role is a common one. When one is constantly being told that one is too narrow minded, shy, selfish, self-centered, reserved, quiet, proud, insensitive, one begins to think there is something wrong with oneself. The victim thought is, most of the times, a belief, an unconscious belief, with feelings of self-doubt, repeated belief as some kind of victimhood established the feeling combined with some incident from the past and the belief becomes ingrained in the mental belief system unaware of the consequences. Victimhood makes one lose self-belief, will augur thoughts of low self-esteem, low capacity to maintain good relationships and unconsciously expect to be treated badly, giving in to be abused, with vague reactions to unfamiliar unconditional love.



The only solution is to create a new belief system within oneself, the belief system with positive thoughts, with a self affirmation that “I am not a victim”. The beliefs in human subconscious mind often control the behaviors, choices, decisions and actions in our life. The suspicion in the mind of being treated like a victim (of abuse, sickness, loneliness, loveless life) is the main cause of victimhood. The first step is to stop thinking in those terms and to refuse to act like a victim. One needs to stop the negative talk in the mind and think positive thoughts for the better. To be your true self at the highest degree without the feeling of guilt, to keep our DNA alive without violating the freedom of others.

Can my life be richer than it is?

We are strongly motivated to live purposefully and meaningfully and that we find meaning in life as a result of responding authentically and meaningfully or humanely to life’s challenges..(idea from logotherapy). Victor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy (1905-1997), was a psychiatrist and neurologist who lived in Vienna and who treated patients both before and after World War II. Frankl found that even under the most undesirable and tragic conditions, what made people to move on was to find a meaning for their lives. In general psychology or existential psychology, it is proved that logotherapy is the only meaning based or value based approach in human life.

Every human being should discover the meaning in one’s life, a new perspective in each stage of your life, to grow through each stage of one’s life, to live through the challenges of life, to achieve greatness through our values, to share, care, to find deep joy within, to heal through meaning..(idea from logo therapy).

The premise that the human being is motivated by the “will to meaning”

- To find meaning under all circumstances
- Motivation to life is the will to find meaning in life
- To realize our freedom to find meaning in what we do, what we experience and our attitude when faced with unchangeable suffering

Frankl states “We can discover the meaning in life in three different ways:

1. Through creating a work or engaging in creating a deed

2. Experience something or encounter someone
3. Our attitude towards unavoidable suffering

How to create work or do a deed

When all hope of living and the purpose of living or the meaning in living is lost, one needs to find meaning in their lives and bear their suffering. The very fact that life still expects something will help to live and find meaning in life.

Experience something or encounter someone

The very fact of realization that we are unique will help us to realize we are fully responsible for our lives and to live life to the fullest possible way. Consciously we need to find responsibility to something or someone or to an unfinished work, which is the ‘why’ of life which will eventually find the ‘how’ of life.

Attitude toward unavoidable suffering

The most important fact is that “everything can be taken from a man but for one thing, that is the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances”. (*Man’s search for Meaning*”, Viktor Frankl)

We are free to choose our approach to anything in life and the way we choose will determine our feelings to life and the meaning of our lives.

One should utilize the freedom to activate the will to find meaning; the will to respond the demand quality of life with meaningful decisions. The *Soma*, *Psyche* and *Noos* are what we have and what we are. It is difficult but not impossible to find the ultimate meaning in life and situations. One need to have self motivation for living and acting. When one sees meaning and purpose, one will be mentally ready for any type of suffering which is different from self actualization in Maslow’s law. Man is free to activate his will to find meaning and attitude in unavoidable circumstances and fate. One needs to find and fulfill the meaning of the moment for practicality in livelihood, to accept the sense of meaning that each one is unique.

Happiness – is it a pursuit?

“Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to be happy. The very pursuit of happiness thwarts happiness”...Victor Frankl.

Happiness is elusive. The more we try to find it, the less we are at it. Happiness is an emotion felt in the here and now. It fades away like all other emotions, positive, negative, pleasure or pain. Research shows that people in the here and now are happier than those who worry about the past or future and the former easily find meaning in their lives. Living in the here and now is necessary to discover meaning in the most miserable challenges in life within one’s limitations, to respond mindfully to find sense in one’s life

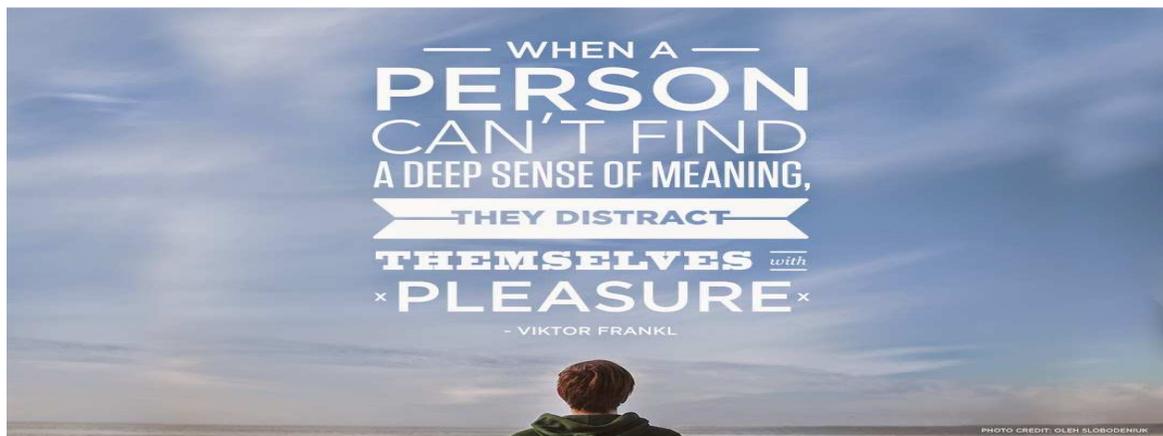
despite the challenges, suffering and loss of loved ones, to recognize one's unique role, to reflect, to be accountable, to focus more on "what for" than the "why" of life situations.

Is finding a purpose and meaning in life with its limitations easy?

No. It is not easy. But nothing in life comes easy. If it does, it will not stay for long. And if it stays, you will easily outgrow it to find that it does not make you happy anymore. Hence to reap benefits of living, to find a meaningful life with a purpose is not easy. We need to weave it hard and sow it fresh and nurture it to reap both happiness and meaning. Love, Faith and Hope adds meaning and colour to it.

Conclusion:

Being 'happy' is not the epitome of success in life. There is more to it than just being happy. There are more complex things like meaning and purpose in life at any stage from infancy to geriatrics. The very realization that life is still expecting something from us, gives us the meaning and purpose within the limitations of our life and in the most tragic, miserable, traumatic sufferings or circumstances.



Realization of our uniqueness and irreplaceability explains our existence, the answer to the 'why' of life which gives the strength, endurance and perseverance to the 'how' of life. (Nietzsche;,Frankl)

The Gallup-Health ways Well-being Index shows that Americans' emotional health index score is now 79.9, based on 30,000 interviews conducted every month between 2008 and 2012(www.huffingtonpost.com). However, according to the Center for Disease Control, about 4 out of 10 Americans have not discovered a satisfying life purpose(www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com). Research clearly indicates that purpose and meaning in life will enhance satisfaction, well-being, physical health, mental health, resilience and self-esteem. It surpasses Freud's pleasure as motivation and Adler's power as motivation of life.

A 'Taker' associates with a happy life, while a 'Giver' associates with meaningful life. Happiness is about feeling good. The materialistic outlook of taking life easy, good physique, the things you can buy, the money you can spend, luxuries of life, branded

materials etc. can make a person happy. But at the same level, less money make the same person unhappy. Here only the meaning and purpose of life has a high impact on happiness. Some may find happy life as a stress free life. 'Happiness' is giving the self what it wants whereas 'meaning' transcends the self. Animals, for that matter the entire natural world pursue the pursuit of happiness and what makes a human being different from animals is that they need to pursue the pursuit of meaning and purpose, unique to humans, rather than pursue pursuit of happiness alone (Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength, Roy Baumeister).

Life is a journey that allows one to grow endlessly to discover meaning and purpose of life and happiness is a byproduct inthe pursuit of living a meaningful life.



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Citations: Frankl E. Victor, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Reference:

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