

UNITS 3 and 4

Finding Meaning in Daily Living

Course Notes

Author: Dr Paul McQuillan – Lifechange Therapies, PO Box 1126, Oxley Qld 4075



Attitudinal Change Course notes Unit 1 Ver 1 18 Feb 2022

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Units 3 and 4

DISCOVERING MEANING IN DAILY LIVING

The Meaning Triangle

James Fowler (1981) has proposed a theory of faith development of human beings that is worth mention in the context of Logotherapy. Fowler does not equate faith development directly with religious development. His theory is more about how a person makes sense of life and finds ultimate meaning. However, the way he began to formulate his research arose from asking himself some profound questions about his own life. He then extended this to asking these specific questions to his respondents. From their responses he began to formulate his theory of faith development. It is worth stopping at this stage and asking yourself the same questions.

- *What am I spending and being spent for? What commands and receives my best time, my best energy?*
- *What causes, dreams, goals or institutions are you pouring out your life for?*
- *As you live your life, what power or powers do you feel or dread? What power or powers do you rely on or trust?*
- *To what or whom are you committed in life? In death?*
- *With whom or what group do you share your most sacred and private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?*
- *What **are** those most sacred hopes, those most compelling goals and purposes in your life?*

These are difficult and thought provoking questions. You are encouraged not to skip over them but to really stop at this point and take some time out to think about them. Perhaps you might make a mental list or even write it down. If you really think about these questions there would probably be more than one response to each and quite possibly a longer list under some.

Time out - take a half hour to really explore these questions for yourself. Then read Frankl's own perspective on the Existential Vacuum.

Then access an optional video lecture to supplement the course notes for this unit before moving on. Simply click on the link to start.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/apis1ojv179a3bk/Unit%202%20Section%203%20Remastered%202.mp4?dl=0>

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Attitude Change Reading 3.1 The Existential Vacuum: A Challenge to Psychiatry. (Text; pp. 61-74)

Once you have taken the time to reflect on Fowler's (1981) questions and Frankl's observations you are ready to move on.

"Viktor Frankl asserts that meaning exists, and you have to *discover* it. Frankl sees life as a puzzle with a hidden picture - like a line drawing of trees, clouds, flowers, and houses, with a caption that says: "Find the bicycle in this picture." You have to turn the drawing this way and that until you discover the bicycle hidden in the confusion of lines. You have to turn life this way and that until you discover meaning. Meaning cannot be given to you by society or your parents. Nor can a psychiatrist prescribe it like a pill. He or she may describe meaningful responses to your situation, but it is up to you to discover what is meaningful to you."
(Fabry, 1988, p. 3)

Frankl points out that many in life can be found in three principal ways: the creative things we do, the uplifting things we experience, and the kind of attitude we have towards situations of unavoidable suffering.

- *Creative values* are values we experience through what we contribute to life. Any creative contribution that we make allows us to feel meaningfully part of life. We have a task, a mandate or a goal in life and therefore feel fulfilled as human beings. When work is a creative expression of responsibility, for example, we can find meaning in that work.
- *Experiential Values*: are blessings we receive from life. Experiential values are manifested in what is good, beautiful and true. We open up to what is good, beautiful and genuine. These things (values) call forth our appreciation; they involve *us in a committed way*. The greatest experiential value, however, is love. Love brings us in vital touch with ourselves and with others with whom we experience in all their uniqueness or specialness. Love can fill us with limitless devotion and arouse feelings of caring and responsibility.
- *Attitudinal Values* are values in which we experience through the right attitudes we have towards life, especially towards inescapable suffering. According to Frankl (1988) three inevitable facts confront us all the time, namely pain, guilt and death. He calls these "the tragic triad of human existence".

Worksheet Attitude Change 3.1 The Meaning Triangle

Now proceed to worksheet 1. This is a longer exercise and it will certainly help you if you did take that time to reflect deeply on Fowler's questions.

First download the Word version of the Worksheet so that you can respond on that worksheet

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If you are working in a group take time to share this with the group before you go on. If you are working online send the responses to your supervisor by uploading them to the LMS

Case study Attitude Change 3.1 A quadriplegic finds meaning

Before proceeding read this case study by Shilup (1979) about her work with a quadriplegic.

Case study Attitude Change 3.2 Live as if you are dying

Before proceeding read this case study which gives both a description of working with patients and a personal account of finding meaning.

Video Attitude Change 3.1 RU OK Day

Before proceeding access this video which shows the challenge for the founder of “R U OK Day” in facing his illness.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/4cfess3ug3upr88/Video%202.3.1%20Aust%20Story%20Gavin%20Larcombe.avi?dl=0>

Assessment Attitude Change 3.1

Now complete assessment 1 before moving on to the next section of this unit.

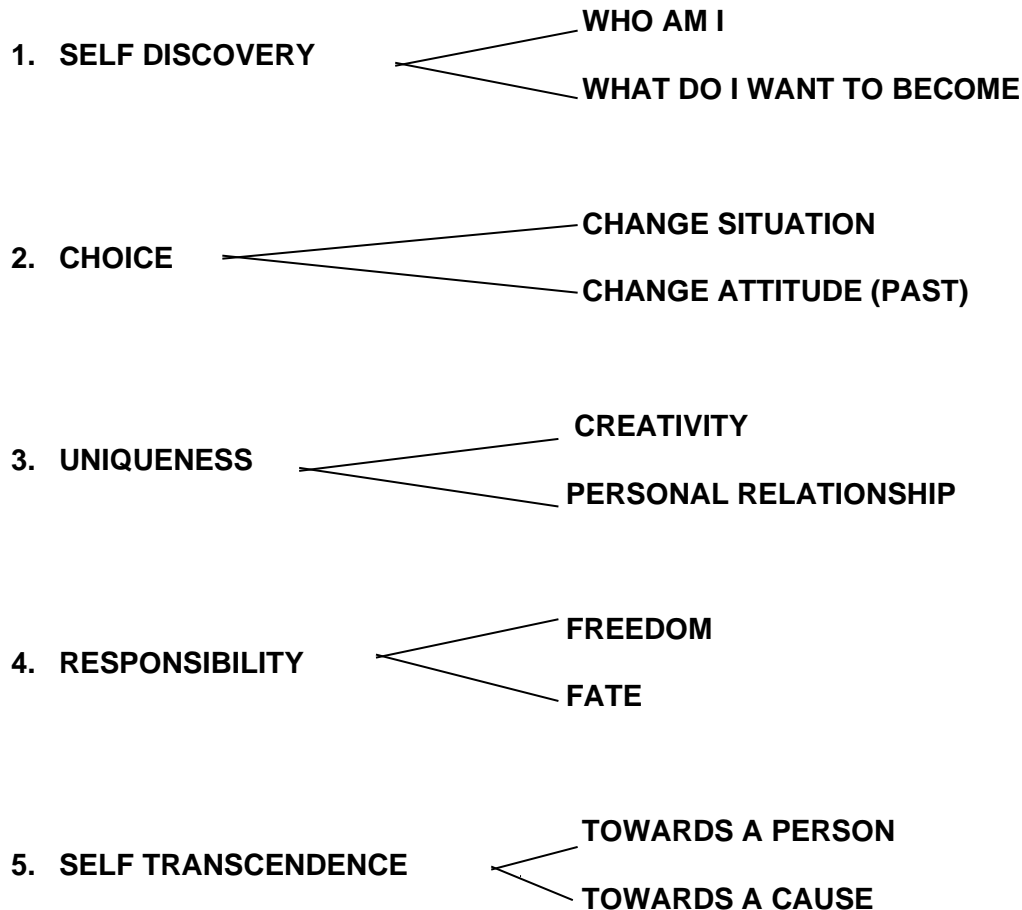
When completed upload your assignment to the LMS.

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Sources of Meaning

Franklian Psychology focuses on at least five circumstances in which we are likely to find meaning. The following five areas are considered guideposts to meaning and are invaluable in the search for meaning of the moment as well as ultimate meaning in life.



SELF-DISCOVERY:

These are situations in which we *discover* a truth about ourselves. As Fabry (1988) notes, "it is of meaningful importance to you to know who you are. Not who you seem to be behind all the masks you have learned to put on so that you will be loved, accepted, and successful, but who you *really* are at your core."

This therapy assists clients in self-discovery through the Socratic Dialogue as individuals are encouraged to move toward the centre of true self and listen to the voice of authentic self. Sometimes insight may be triggered by an experience or something seen, heard, read, fantasized, or dreamed about. However the discovery comes, the discovery has to be ours. We have to say, "Yes, *that's the way I am. That's how I feel, think, and react.*" Every time we catch a glimpse of the true self, we also have a glimpse of meaning.

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A Socratic Dialogue can assist individuals in gaining true insight. This dialogue may involve a direct or an indirect approach. An example of the direct approach is that of making lists. This process involves making two lists of adjectives that describe how you see yourself. One list of things you like about yourself, the other of things you don't like, and then responding to questions such as the following:

- Do you see anything that surprises you?
- Which was easier to write down, the positive side or the negative side?
- Are you surprised by how many things you like about yourself?

An indirect approach is also effective, and at times, more useful than the direct approach. For example, Fabry (1988) describes reflecting on childhood memories as an effective means of self-discovery. This exercise involves responding to questions such as the following:

- What are your earliest childhood memories?
- Are they painful, happy, and puzzling?
- Recall some of your favourite stories or movies.
- What are some of the favourite sayings of your mother and father?
- What are your hopes now?
- What once was painful and frightening-is it still so?
- Did something positive come out of the negative experiences?
- Can you see meaning in those old, painful, experiences?

Other approaches used to assist in self-discovery include direct approaches such as "Who are You," and indirect approaches such as "If you were an animal," and "What's in a name?" Additionally, there are Non-verbal approaches such as "Mask-making," "Self-portrayal," "The Line Game," and "I am a thing in the room."

CHOICES:

We always have choices, although we are not always aware of this fact. Situations in which we see choices, limited as they may be, help us to see meaning. Despair comes from a sense of feeling trapped, but we actually have choices in all circumstances. Clearly, we have choices about the things we can change and the meaningful thing to do in these instances is to bring about change. However, even in those situations that are unchangeable, we still have choices about our *attitude* regarding what we cannot change. The conditions of our lives do not determine us. We determine whether to give in to conditions or to stand up to them.

When we have a choice to change a situation it is meaningful to do so. One way in which to discover what our choices are is to create a list of possibilities. From such a list a meaningful choice can be made. This exercise is known as The Basic List. The first step is to describe the basic "trap" you feel you are in. Then list possible solutions for the problem, followed by the positive and negative consequences of each option. This list will illustrate just how "not trapped" you are.

However, some situations must be accepted. In these cases, changing a meaningless or painful situation is not an option. In these moments we stand in the arena of fate and freedom. This is the moment when we experience the freedom to take a stance toward our circumstances rather than being crushed by the reality of

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the situation. This is the moment when we are free to choose a meaningful attitude toward the circumstance.

The capacity to choose and alter an attitude in the face of an unalterable circumstance is at the heart of what it means to be human.

UNIQUENESS:

The third circumstance where meaning reveals itself is one in which we experience our uniqueness. We experience our uniqueness as we understand our importance in relationships and in situation. When we feel replaceable, life seems meaningless. Whether it is a job, a relationship, or as a child in a family, wherever we feel replaceable, we experience a degree of meaninglessness. Any situation or relationship in which we feel easily replaced, we feel devalued. This usually results in a devaluing of meaning in the situation or relationship.

However, there are areas where we are completely unique. There are relationships and situations in which we are truly irreplaceable. In these instances, it does matter whether or not we exist. There are two primary ways in which we experience our uniqueness. These are personal relationships and our creativity.

With regard to personal relationships, only you relate to your family the way you do. Only you relate to your friends exactly the way you do. A true love relationship is always based on the uniqueness of each person in the relationship.

The second avenue through which we experience uniqueness is through our creativity. Do you write poetry? Only you can write that poem. Do you paint? Only you can paint exactly the way you paint. Do you write music? Only you can write a song the way you do. Having said this, it is important to understand that uniqueness is not expressed solely through artistic ability. As pointed out by Fabry (1988), meaning through uniqueness can be found in any job. Creativity is a guidepost to uniqueness and meaning. We must become aware of this wonderful treasure and use it. One of the most wonderful aspects of our humanity is simply that "there never was another 'you' before you and there will never be another 'you' after you." "You" are utterly and completely unique in the stream of human existence.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Responsibility is the fourth area in which meaning can be found. The freedom of making choices will not lead to a meaningful life if it is not lived responsibly and if we live only for our own sake. The questions, "Who am I?" and "What are my goals?" in order to yield meaningful answers must take on the sense of "Who ought I to be?"

As pointed out by Fabry (1988), there are three avenues through which we find meaning in responsibility:

1. By responding to the meaning of the moment.
2. By making responsible choices where choices exist.
3. By *not* feeling responsible when there is no choice.

In each of these three pathways we are response-able individuals.

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Additional meaningful questions in the search for responsible living include:

- Am I being the person *now* I want to be in the future?
- Where am I falling short of the person I ought to be?
- What are my potentials?
- Have I thought about what my potentials are?
- Am I addressing the areas of my life in ways to strengthen myself?
- How can I not merely fit into life but improve it?
- Where am I making a difference?
- How am I improving what goes on around me?
- How does my presence make my work setting a better place?
- How does my personhood make my relationships healthier?
- What are the situations and circumstances in which my presence brings improvement?

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE:

The last area in which we experience meaning is situations in which we reach beyond ourselves toward a cause to serve or people to love. Even responsible decisions will not fill the existential vacuum if we make them only for our own sake. Meaning comes from commitments that transcend personal interests. Meaning comes, as Frankl puts it, from *reaching beyond the self toward causes to serve or people to love*.

Self-transcendence is important because it encompasses all other areas where meaning is available (self-discovery, choice, uniqueness, and responsibility), and because it provides meaning in exactly the area where you feel defeated: it turns your defeat into victory (Fabry, 1988). Some individuals find deep meaning in acting for the sake of God. Some by acting for the sake of another human being or for a cause. Most people want to be free, unique, and self-reliant. But most of all they want to be useful. They want to know for whom or for what they live, work, suffer, and die.

Questions that address self-transcendence include the following:

- Where are you reaching out beyond yourself?
- What causes do you have to serve that give purpose and meaning to life?
- Who are the people that you love and reach out to?
- What are the causes in life, and who are the people in life that bring out the desire within to reach beyond yourself?

Reading Attitude Change 3.2 Medical Ministry (Text pp. 89-108)

Before proceeding read the section of your text on “Medical Ministry” and then complete Worksheet 2.3.2

Worksheet Attitude Change 3.2 Identifying sources of meaning

Before proceeding complete worksheet 3 for this Section.

First download the Word version of the Worksheet so that you can respond on that worksheet

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Assessment Attitude Change 3.2 An exercise in self-reflection

To finish this Section and before moving on to Section 4, complete assessment 2, a self-reflection on finding meaning.

When completed upload your assignment to the LMS.

If you are doing this course in a group your supervisor will negotiate submission of your assignment with the group.

References:

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