

Meaning for Wellbeing



What does *Mean* mean?

mean (v)

- Old English: "intend (to do something), plan"
 - Middle English: "have in mind"
 - Old Saxon *menian* "signify, make known,"
 - Old Irish *mian* "wish, desire"
 - Welsh *mwyn* "enjoyment"
 - By 1888: of a person or thing- "to be of some account, to matter (to)"
 - Perhaps from root ***men-** "to think".
- *Proto-Indo-European root meaning "to think," with derivatives referring to qualities and states of mind or thought.

What is Meaning?

meaning (n.)

1300c. *Meninge*: "Sense, that which is intended to be expressed"

1680s: Sense of "significance, import"

mean (adj)

"occupying a middle or intermediate place;" mid-14c

...finding meaning in the middle...when you don't know...?



**“Trust the wait. Embrace the uncertainty. Enjoy the beauty of becoming. When nothing is certain, anything is possible.”
- Mandy Hale**

Meaning is complex and multifaceted:

Meaning could be understood in terms of:

- **A framework for understanding your place in the world and how things connect (people, places, objects). These provide us with information on how the world works; meaning connects things – Heine, Proux & Vohs, (2006)**
- **A motivation/behavioural framework using the approach and avoidance systems - Wong (2013)**
- **Meaning could be understood as what makes life worth living - Martela & Steger (2016)**

Logotherapy

- Viktor Frankl
- Based on the idea that we are driven by a “will to meaning” or an inner desire to find purpose and meaning in life (Amelis & Dattilio, 2013).
- Three elements of Logotherapy:
 - 1) Human life has meaning
 - 2) Human beings long to experience their own sense of life meaning
 - 3) Humans have the potential to experience meaning under any and every circumstance (Schulenberg, 2003).

Logotherapy is based on the philosophical concepts of:

- Freedom of will
 - Will to meaning
 - Meaning of life (Batthyany, 2019).
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- **Freedom of will:** We are free to choose our responses no matter our circumstances.
 - **Will to meaning:** We are free to achieve goals and purposes in life. When we can't realize our "will to meaning", we can become frustrated, aggressive, depressed and develop addictions.
 - **Meaning in life:** We are free and responsible to bring forth our best possible selves by realizing the meaning of the moment in every situation.

...freedom to choose, the will to find meaning, and the responsibility of living a purposeful life (Hutzel, 1990).



Viktor Frankl

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves” (Frankl, 2006)

**“He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how”
(Nietzsche)**

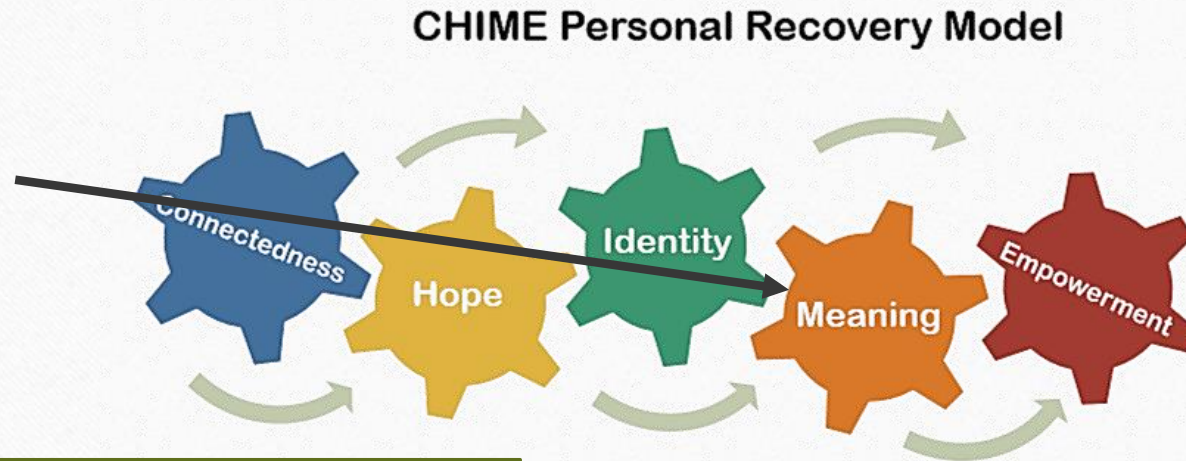
“It doesn’t really matter what we expected from life, but what life expected from us” (Frankl, 1986)

Reflection Question:

What is it that makes “those hard moments, the dark nights, and endless struggles worth the fight” in your life? (Madeson, 2020)

Meaning is an element in the CHIME Model of Personal Recovery

(Leamy et al., 2011)



Leamy et al. (2011)

- Finding meaning in mental illness experience
- Meaningful life goals
- Purpose
- Meaning in life
- Quality of life
- Spirituality
- Meaningful life and social roles
- Meaningful life and social goals
- Rebuilding life

Wellbeing Benefits of Meaning

Meaning has been associated with:

- A sense of freedom
- Personal responsibility
- Self- efficacy
- Positive life goals
- Sense of purpose (Marco et al., 2015)



A Lack of meaning has been associated with:

- **Feelings of hopelessness**
- **Aimlessness**
- **Lacking a sense of control over one's life**

Consequently, promoting meaning in life has been used as an intervention focus in EUPD treatment programmes (Marco et al., 2015).



Reflections Questions

- What sources do you derive meaning from in your life?
- How do your values, and goals, fit into your sense of meaning?
- What is the difference between meaning in life verses meaning of life?



Meaning is made up of many elements

Meaning In Life Model - Martela & Steger (2016)

- **Coherence:** Sense of comprehensibility – that your life makes sense
- **Purpose:** Sense of core goals, aims and direction in life
- **Significance:** Sense of life's inherent value and having a life worth living

Alternative Meaning In Life Model - George & Park (2016)

- **Comprehension:** degree of coherence and understanding experiences regarding your life
- **Purpose:** extent of being directed and motivated by valued life goals
- **Mattering:** extent of experiencing one's existence as significant, important, and value in the world

What is Meaning?

- According to Wong (2010) a **meaningful** and fulfilling life is unique to each of us, however, consists of:

Purpose: The pursuit of a life goal

Understanding: of who you are and your significant role in life

Responsibility: Only you are responsible for deciding your meaning in life, and what is significant to you, and taking responsibility for your actions.

Enjoyment: A deep sense of significance comes when you actively take responsibility, to pursue life goals.

- According to Baumeister and Vohs (2002) humans have four **needs** which when met, lead to a sense of meaning in life:

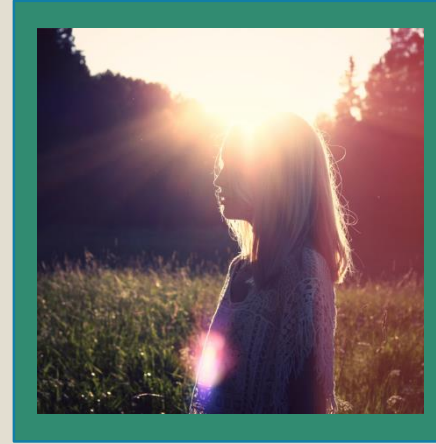
Purpose: The belief that what we do now affects our future.

Pursuing life goals which lead to a sense of fulfilment.

Values: The fundamental attitudes guiding our mental processes and behaviour.

Efficacy: The belief that you are competent meet challenges and achieve goals

Self-worth: reasons for believing that one is a good and worthy person.



How to Increase Meaning:

Like many components of participation; meaning is not a solid construct but is made up of many “**micro-elements**”.

Rather than feeling overwhelmed by increasing meaning as a whole, try to identify which “micro-element” in particular you struggle with; by working on improving those, you may find your meaning towards participation increases.

Micro-Elements of Meaning

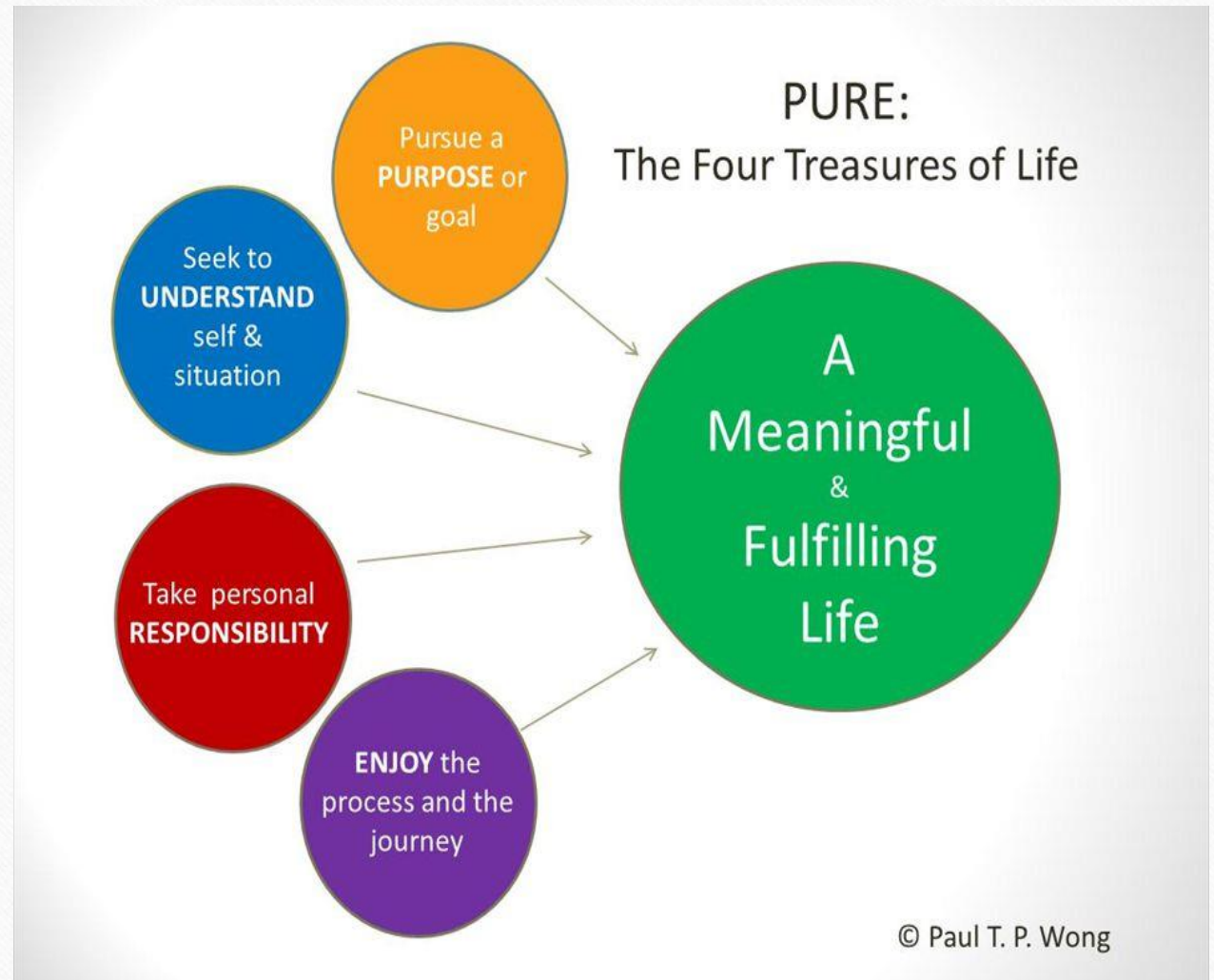
- **Purpose:** Pursuing significant life goals
- Taking **Responsibility:** For your actions and pursuit of meaning
- **Understanding:** Who you are, and what is important to you
- **Self-Efficacy:** believing you are able and capable to pursue goals
- **Self-worth:** Believing that your life has value and you matter
- **Values:** Knowing what is important to you and being guided by this

How Does Meaning Affect Participation?

- Participation in everyday activities is a vital part of human development.
- Through **participation** we learn **skills** and **abilities**; **connect with others** and find **purpose** and **meaning** in life.
- Meaning, like the other elements of participation contributes to participation in its own right, but also exists as part of a wider participation “**eco-system**”.

PURE Model - Wong (2014)

- A framework for goal setting
- Finding meaning in the positive times



Fivefold Path to Positive Mental Health

Wong (2015)

- 1. Looking back for lessons learned in life.**
- 2. Looking at present opportunities to learn and serve.**
- 3. Looking forward to fulfilling future life goals.**
- 4. Looking inward in mindful meditation.**
- 5. Looking downward to extend a helping hand to those who need it.**



ABCDE model

Wong (2012)

- A framework for coping with negative aspects of life, and unavoidable suffering

Accept: Confront the reality

Believe: Life is still worth living

Commit: To goals & action

Discover: Meaning of the situation & the self

Evaluate: The situation and make sense of situation
and then decide course of action

Acceptance of where you are at and that there will be things that you can't change but you can change how you deal with them. - Serena

Meaning and Purpose are not the same:

- **Meaning** refers to how we “make sense of life and our roles in it”
- **Purpose** refers to the “aspirations that motivate our activities” (Ivtzan et al., 2016).
- With out these elements, **our life lacks a story.**
- As humans, we need something to strive for and a sense of connectedness between the important moments that make up our existence (Steger, 2009).



Meaning, Purpose and Goals

“You don’t find meaning; you create it...”

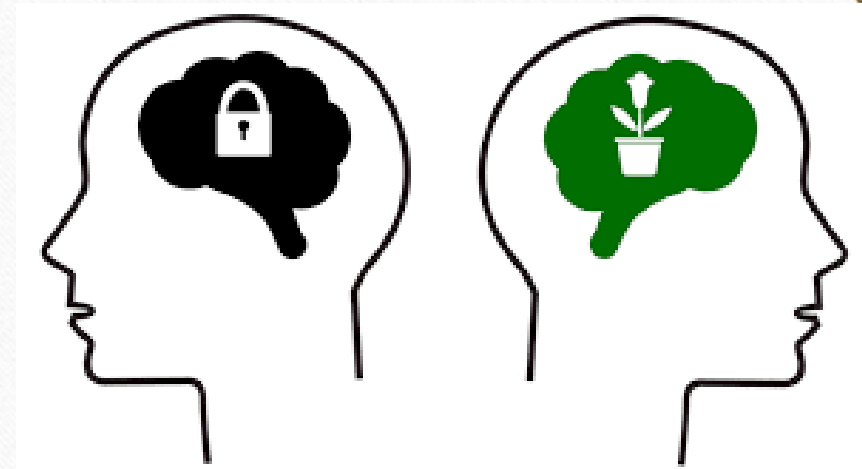
- **Meaning and Purpose** are important elements for pursuing goals.
- We only attach importance to an experience and see it as significant if **it has meaning**.



Consider what gives you a sense of meaning in your life

Finding Meaning Through Growth

- Having a growth mindset can lead to increased purpose in life.
- Discover and build on your strengths and find ways to use these more regularly in daily life.
- Accept that mistakes are part of learning and a part of life.
- Opposite of growth mindset is Fixed Mindset
- Dweck, (2006)



Values

- What we consider essential and what we live for in life
- Living a meaningful life can be facilitated by a greater awareness of core values and the thoughts behind them
- The insights provided by understanding personal values can help regain a sense of meaning to improve motivation.



Activities to Increase Meaning

The sources of meaning and a sense of purpose in our lives are highly personal, subjective, and will vary throughout our lives...



Values Vision Board

- A visual way to become more aware and connected to your values
- Use pictures or Powerpoint/Instagram/ Pinterest etc.
- Group the images by life categories or in order of overall life values
- Be led by feeling rather than rational thinking, with no goals in mind
- Share your vision board with those close to you
- Place the vision board somewhere it can be seen daily
- Regularly return to the board to see if values have shifted and whether life is still balanced with the core values



Writing or reading about personal experiences

- Can help develop a shared understanding of meaning
- Not only does it build a sense of who we are, but it also makes sense of our experiences
- The stories we tell shape how we make sense of ourselves and the world around us... we can draw inferences from stories we tell about the self - our goals, our values... (Singer, 2004)



Foster a passion (purpose)

- “Either motivation or passion drives our desire and interest in activities” (Vallerand, 2012).
- *Motivation*: Useful for activities that are considered dull (e.g., washing the dishes)
Passion: The driving force for activities that has significance for us.



Develop Social Relationships

- Making connections with other individuals, and maintaining these relationships can develop a sense of meaningfulness (Heintzelman & King, 2014)
- Sharing your passions with a group of like-minded people can increase a sense of meaningfulness (Vallarand, 2012)
- But...focus on relationships that make you feel like you 'belong' and where you feel like you fit in with the members of that group (Lambert et al., 2013)



Take control of your environment (coherence)

- A cognitively coherent environment can boost ratings of meaningfulness (Heintzelman & King, 2014).
- Simple ways to create a cognitively coherent environment:
 - Maintain a routine
 - Allow extra time for unexpected tasks
 - Schedule 'down-time' and time for meaningful activity
 - Maintain a tidy environment
- Unexpected challenges will pop up, but these will have less of a negative impact if you already have a sense of control of your environment.



Meaningful Photographs (Steger et al. 2014)

- Over the next week, take photographs of things that make your life feel meaningful or full of purpose.
- Once you have collected all of your photos and items, take time to look at and reflect on each one. For each photo or item, write down a response to the following question: “What does this photo represent, and why is it meaningful?”



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