What’s It All For?
The Role of Purpose, Mattering, & Coherence in Cultivating a Meaningful Life

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Positive psychology uses your strengths to overcome roadblocks and engage in a more joyful, courageous, meaningful life.

The Carol Ackerman Positive Psychology Clinic conducts research on the benefits of psychotherapy and the role that positive emotion plays in fostering mental, emotional, and behavioral health and wellness for children and adults.
Meaning in Life

MIL refers to people’s perceptions that their lives matter, that they make sense, and that they unfold in accordance with some over-arching purpose.

(Steger & Dik, 2009, p. 133)

• You can have MIL without knowing the meaning of life, the universe, and everything. :)

Positive Psychology Hosford Clinic
Participants will learn about:
* The importance of meaning in life
* Sources of meaning
* How to increase a "felt sense" of meaning in life
Artist
Artist’s Home
December, 2019

Positive Psychology/Hosford Clinic
What if you got a “second chance”?

“I should have died. What am I going to do now?”

“I wanted to give it away, but I needed it to live.”

• Salience of MIL varies
  • Developmental Events
  • Transitions
  • Crises precipitate a search for meaning
Making Meaning is What Makes Us Human!

Meaning in Life is Simple & Complex

(Hill, 2018; Steger, 2009)

- Simple
  - Purpose-Centered (Motivation)
  - Significance-Centered (Cognition)
- Complex
  - You can sense it (Emotion)
  - You can appraise it (Evaluation)
  - You can seek it (Motivation)
  - You can create it (Cognition)
  - You might like thinking about it (Attitude)
Meaning in Life Correlates

Positive Correlations
- Positive mood (bidirectional)
- Satisfaction with life
- Subjective well-being
- Happiness
- Physical and mental health
- Longevity
- Adapting to negative life events
- Better work adjustment

Negative Correlations
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Seeking therapy
- Workaholism
- Work-life conflict

Bonebright, Clay, & Ankenmann, 2000; Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000; King, Hicks, Knoll, & Del Balso, 2006; Reker & Wong, 1988; Solomon, 2009; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006; Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009; Zetzer, 2017
Tripartite Model of MIL

Purpose/Goals, Mattering, & Coherence

(Hill, 2018; Simon, Arndt, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1998; Steger, 2009; Steger & Dik, 2009)

**Purpose/Goals**
- Identification of and intention to pursue highly valued over arching lie-goals
- Purpose tied to values
- Purpose informs goals
- Active engagement in pursuing goals
- Transcends mundane concerns

**Mattering**
- Universal need to be noticed
- Feel recognized/important
- Having value “as a person”
- Comes from relationships
- Part of something greater than oneself; part of a community
- Making contributions

**Coherence**
- Making sense of one’s past, present, and future
- Comprehensibility
- Understanding one’s life
- Order out of chaos
- Culturally informed especially after a traumatic or terror event
Felt Sense

- Intuitive global felt sense that one’s life is meaningful, without necessarily knowing the reasons
- Being grounded
- Being centered
- Being in tune with life
- Being connected to self

(Hill, 2018, p. 23)

Reflectivity

- Valuing and enjoying thinking about meaning in life
- Asking and reflecting on:
  - What is my purpose?
  - Do I matter?
  - What is my significance?

Two More Aspects
Selected Sources of Meaning

Sources may range from Negative/unhealthy to Neutral to Positive/healthy

(Hill, 2018, p. 56)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose Goals</th>
<th>Mattering</th>
<th>Coherence</th>
<th>Felt Sense</th>
<th>Reflectivity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career/work</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Religion or spirituality</td>
<td>Purpose/goals</td>
<td>Seeing benefits of reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Preserving values</td>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>Encouragement to reflect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Introspection on past, present, future</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Curiosity about MIL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dedication to a cause</td>
<td>Purpose and goals</td>
<td>Attitude towards suffering</td>
<td>Self-acceptance</td>
<td>Introspection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altruism or helping others</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Managing fear of death</td>
<td>Self-worth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing valuable work</td>
<td>Career/work</td>
<td>Reflecting on existential issues</td>
<td>Self-transcendence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Personal growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a passion for one’s work</td>
<td>Leaving a legacy</td>
<td>Purpose/goals</td>
<td>Reflecting on MIL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meaning in Life Activity

- Purpose
- Goals
- Coherence
- Comprehensibility
- Mattering
- Felt Sense

Reflectivity
Take-Aways

• Purpose/Goals
  • Concrete goals depend on abstract goals (values) for motivation
  • Self-transcendent goals promote meaning in life

• Mattering
  • Relationships matter most

• Coherence
  • Making sense is important and contributes to purpose

• Felt Sense
  • Meaning in life can be felt, but hard to describe

• Reflectivity
  • Promotes awareness of meaning
THANK YOU!

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