

Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor E. Frankl • Psychiatrist, Holocaust Survivor, Founder of Logotherapy

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK

Viktor Frankl was a Viennese psychiatrist who survived three years in Nazi concentration camps, losing his parents, his brother, and his wife. Observing himself and his fellow prisoners, he noticed something remarkable: those who held onto a sense of meaning — a person to love, work left unfinished, a future worth reaching for — endured suffering that broke others. From this he built logotherapy, a therapy centered on one conviction: our deepest drive is not pleasure or power, but the search for meaning.

THREE PATHS TO MEANING

CREATING

Through what we give

Work, projects, acts of care — contributing something of ourselves to the world.

EXPERIENCING

Through what we receive

Beauty, nature, art — and above all, loving and being truly known by another person.

OUR STANCE

Through how we face pain

When suffering can't be changed, we can still choose the attitude we bring to it.

HOW THIS SHOWS UP IN OUR WORK TOGETHER

- **The space between.** Between what happens to us and how we respond, there is a space — and in that space lives our freedom. Much of therapy is about widening it.
- **Meaning over mood.** Rather than asking only “how do I feel better?”, we can also ask “what matters enough to carry this for?” Values give pain a direction.
- **You are not your suffering.** There is a part of you that notices the pain — a steadier self that can observe, choose, and act. We practice speaking from that place.
- **Life asks, we answer.** Frankl flipped the question: instead of asking what we expect from life, we listen for what life is asking of us — today, in this season.

"Between the stimulus and response, there is a gap, and in that gap lies your freedom."

— attributed to Viktor Frankl

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH THIS WEEK

- What — or who — gives your life a sense of “why” right now?
- Where in your life is there a gap between what happens and how you respond?
- If this difficult season were asking something of you, what might it be?

"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." — Nietzsche, quoted by Frankl

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