

A man's search for
meaning: where
agency matters most
essay



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The essence of living, without emotion is something alien to human life, for life is only true when emotion is present. The essence of death, without mental and spiritual control is also alien to us; for death is only a physical thing, and we are more than just a physical thing. The question that now awaits us, is how. How can we have a choice in an undefeated fate? How is there still a freedom for us to grasp, even unto the end of physical control?

An endless list of questions in correlation with this idea may seem apparent, but after reading A Man's Search For Meaning, I have found one answer that can satisfy any question of that sort: As much as we are physical beings, we are also mental, and spiritual beings. We are not singular in nature; therefore, we are full of meaning; whether at a physical, mental, or spiritual level.

Going into a mental aspect, you will see that the mind is the thing that pertains and evaluates our physical surroundings.

Without the mind, there would be no emotion, no life; but even when our mind is soaring with evaluative enlightenment, and emotional understanding, there is still something we lack: The capability to spiritually comprehend the big picture. If we were able to have a broader perspective in that sense, death would not be a time of loss and mourning, and life would be viewed as more fragile and meaningful. Our mental capacity of evaluation is relatively small, compared to what a spiritual and eternal capacity is capable of; even life and death itself becomes insignificant if eternity is your comparison.

Looking into Victor Frankl's experience, we see a point, describing that a situation seeming to be very overwhelming at the time, is not overwhelming in the big picture. Thus we see there is more to a situation than a physical circumstance, there is a meaning. There is always a meaning in everything that happens to anybody in this world; and no matter what, nothing can take away the essence of survival in that meaning. Even unto ultimate despair, you still have a mind and freedom over your fate.

How can a dire situation apply to us? The answer is through everyday trials.

Through struggles and anxieties that are little in comparison to those that plague much of the world, but still teaches truth through the purpose of agency. In the case of *A Man's Search For Meaning*, Victor Frankl writes his account of his experience in a German concentration camp. This part of history, during World War 2 and the genocide of the Jews, was the darkest years in Jewish history.

We come to a drastic situation, where the mental health becomes extremely important, and yet no one was prepared to face the pure evil of the camps.

The author, (also the survivor) gave us horrifying accounts of what went on in those camps, and him being a psychologist puts us into a mental point of view of what the inmates were going through. Living in those incarceration camps was not just an extreme physical struggle, it was to the same degree, a mental struggle: A struggle for meaning, purpose, and the will to keep living. Spiritual and mental refuge becomes the only thing that matters in physically exhausting circumstances. In the middle part of the book,

Frankly describes an experience where he is starving, freezing and working ruthlessly, on a railroad track.

Though his physical turmoil was to ultimate extremes, Victor Frankly still found refuge and survival through the thoughts of his dead wife.

He did not know she was dead at the time, but later (as written in the book), he describes why his love still lived: " Love goes very far beyond the physical peers on of the beloved. It finds it's deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of import once".

You still have a mind, and whether physical trials may claim your life or the life of someone you love, your spiritual being and mind manifests to you a purpose and meaning. Victor Frankly did not let the physical turmoil destroy him. He found love through his mind and through TTS.

If you have redeem in your mind, then you also have freedom and power over your soul. If real love goes beyond a physical realm, meaning does also, and if you have a meaning, then an undetectable death would be a sacrifice, not an invasion full of wasted life.

A man's physical surroundings can influence his mind, but only if he consciously levels it. When you're in a place where all you see is constant negativity, it becomes every hard to change a way of thinking.

The easiest thing to do in that scenario, is to give up and let the physical influences crowd your mind and overwhelm your soul. The best thing to do,

to fight it and find meaning in your suffering. Relating back to Victor
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Franker's experience, he describes that a lot of the men in the concentration camp chose to give up by not making an effort to survive. The prisoner who had lost faith in the future, was doomed.

With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold, he let himself decline and become subject to mental and physical decay. " Physical influences can overtake your mind and body, but only if you let them to take over. Those men in that camp chose an attitude of ultimate despair and abandoned their spiritual freedom. Not a physical thing can take away your agency, but because of that agency your fate can be chosen; this freedom can be your lifeline or your downfall. We can shape our surroundings.

Think about it, in everyday life, if a place is not the place you would like to be you remove yourself from that place.

If you make a decision, good or bad consequences (depending on that decision) will follow, shaping your surroundings. If you're in a concentration camp, and all your physical surroundings are made up of death, sickness, decay, and darkness, you can still shape your mental and spiritual surroundings. Everything that happens to you, even if you are forced to do something, all ends with something opposite of physical. Because you are also a person of mental and spiritual agency.

No matter what circumstance that determines your fate, the status of your mind and attitude, becomes the only thing that matters. Victor Frankl expresses this idea continuously throughout the book: " Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms

choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose own way".

You our mind should be your strength, for the body depends on it to survive. Victor Frankly states: "ma n can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom of Independence of mind, even in such terrible co intentions of physic and physical stress.....

T is this spiritual freedom which can not be taken away t hat makes life meaningful and purposeful" No matter what physical thing accosts you and tears you down, the mind is sit control. Death, it is a part of life which we all must face, so why not face it wit knowledgeable purpose. Suffering, it is also a part of life which we all must FAA CE, so why not face it with meaning, as what Victor Frankly has said: " If there is a meaning in IL fee at all, then here malls be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part Of life, even as fate and death".

If it is impossible to get rid of a circumstance, would you give up and I et that circumstance rule over you, or would you face it with an attitude of strength and meaning? Don't be too hasty in throwing out a rapid answer. Your honest decision for t his question can only be made at the height of the challenge. After reading a Man's Search For Meaning I realized that the people who endured through those horrific and excruciating g challenges of the concentration camps, were the one's who still had faith in a future. They were the ones who did not abandon their spiritual freedom to destruction.