

VIKTOR FRANKL'S Principles
for Discovering MEANING in Life and Work

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS



ALEX PATTAKOS, PhD, and
ELAINE DUNDON

Foreword by **STEPHEN R. COVEY**
author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

THIRD EDITION
Revised and Expanded

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Praise for

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

“In this newly revised edition, Alex Pattakos and Elaine Dundon not only honor the legacy of Viktor Frankl, but they also further it by bringing his work to a new generation of readers in search of a more meaningful life. In very practical ways, they show that when we put meaning at the heart of our lives, we’re better able to thrive and reach our full potential.”

—Arianna Huffington, founder of *The Huffington Post* and founder and CEO of Thrive Global

“If you intend to read just one self-help book in your life, pick this one. You won’t regret it.”

—Alexander Batthyany, PhD, Director, Viktor Frankl Institute, Vienna, Austria

“Here is a landmark book that, among other things, underscores how the search for meaning is intimately related to and positively influences health improvement at all levels. Reading *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is an insightful prescription for promoting health and wellness!”

—Kenneth R. Pelletier, PhD, MD (hc), Clinical Professor of Medicine and Professor of Public Health, University of Arizona and University of California, San Francisco Schools of Medicine

“*Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is an important book about creating a meaningful life—a life that matters and makes a difference. Those of us involved in the individual quest for meaning will find valuable information and inspiration in it. Meaning—choosing it, living it, sustaining it—is a significant personal, as well as societal, issue of the twenty-first century.”

—Marita J. Wesely, Trends Expert and Trends Group Manager, Hallmark Cards, Inc.

“This book is a gem. It is an iconoclastic book, which is set to become iconic. With it, Alex and Elaine have altered the Logotherapeutic landscape. They bring therapy from the clinic into the corporate world. They show how work can be a source of meaning by applying the revolutionary ideas and insights of our mentor Dr. Viktor Frankl. The authors succeed in demonstrating the link between Logotherapy and labor but more—they do it with bravado and brilliance. I recommend this book with relish.”

—Stephen J. Costello, PhD, Founder and Director, Viktor Frankl Institute of Ireland

“In the permanent white water of our lives everywhere and especially at work, the meaning of what we do and of who we are is continually in danger of negation. The creation of meaning cannot be a once-and-for-all, set-it-and-forget-it affair, but rather needs to become our most basic ongoing achievement. This book is virtually unique in providing us with both a philosophy and a set of methods for keeping the meaning of our lives and our work vibrantly alive, relevant, and nourishing.”

—Peter B. Vaill, PhD, Professor of Management, Antioch University, and Author of *Managing as a Performing Art*

“Magical. . . . If you read this book patiently and honestly, it may begin to change your attitude and thought process. Deeply and impressively subversive in more ways than one, this book invites us directly in the search for meaning of our work and life.”

—Ping Fu, Author of *Bend, Not Break: A Life in Two Worlds*, Founder and Former CEO, Geomagic, Inc.

“Not averse to giving ‘recipes,’ Pattakos makes them transparent and convincing enough, and he amply supports them by personal observations and experiences, by testimonies and quotations, by anecdotes and proven wisdom, adding more than a sprinkle of wit and common sense. And he does it all in an immensely readable style.”

—Franz J. Vesely, PhD, Viktor Frankl Institute, Vienna, Austria

“Logotherapy was tested in Nazi concentration camps, so it speaks uniquely of meaning in extremes of unavoidable suffering. But Frankl also encouraged the discovery of meaning in our everyday workplaces, and Pattakos offers both a *why* and a *how*.”

—Haddon Klingberg Jr., PhD, Author of *When Life Calls Out to Us: The Love and Lifework of Viktor and Elly Frankl*

“If you want to bring life to your personal and/or organizational values—read *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*. It is particularly helpful if you are committed to living an authentic (values-driven) life. This is a book you will want all your associates and family members to read again and again.”

—Ann Rhoades, President, People Ink, and Former Executive Vice President, People, JetBlue Airways

“The transcendent spirit of Viktor Frankl vindicated human resilience. Alex Pattakos nimbly brings essential new life to that spirit. Reading this book is a choice—a choice to add deeper meaning to your life.”

—Jeffrey K. Zeig, PhD, Founder and Director, The Milton H. Erickson Foundation

“Living and working in such changing times takes courage. This book helps us connect with ourselves and meaning in order to be happier, develop resilience in life and work, and co-create a better future. In a time when there is so much unpredictability, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is a must-read to serve as a prescription for personal and business leadership.”

—Lisa Schilling, RN, MPH, Vice President, Healthcare Performance Improvement, Kaiser Permanente

“It is very rare to encounter a book that is simultaneously profound and approachable, one that addresses the essential crux of the human dilemma in a manner that is inviting and even heartfelt. *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is just such a book. I highly recommend it.”

—Jeffrey Mishlove, PhD, Dean of Transformational Psychology, University of Philosophical Research, and Author of *The Roots of Consciousness*

“A must-read for all those who want to lead successful lives. . . . The book has universal appeal and would help people working in any part of the world, and at any type of job. Dr. Pattakos’s concepts resonate well with me—a Sikh by religion. I believe that world peace would be greatly helped by having more and more people happy with their lives, as *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* could help them be.”

—Karuna Singh, Program Manager, Office of Public Affairs, U.S.
Consulate General, Kolkata, India

“*Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is an enormously inspiring eye and heart opener, enlarging the scope of our life and work in a wonderful way. It’s a book full of wisdom, a road sign to the meaning and riches of life.”

—Dr. Heinrich Anker, Cofounder, Management Centre Zug (Switzerland),
and President, Swiss Society of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis

“CEOs, as well as the average worker, can be both informed and inspired by Pattakos’s book.”

—Paul T. P. Wong, PhD, President, International Network on Personal
Meaning, and Coeditor of *The Human Quest for Meaning: A Handbook of Psychological Research and Clinical Applications*

“It has been a long wait—a very long wait! But Frankl’s principles and methods have at last been set free to be used and enjoyed and practiced in the work situation.”

—Dr. Patti Havenga Coetzer, Founder, Viktor Frankl Foundation of
South Africa

“Masterpiece. Challenging. Insightful. Motivational. Inspirational. Magnificent. *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* branches all of these into one central theme: staying true to you, the real you. This book is a must-read for all educators, parents, and students. It provides such a clear view of the importance of character and how love ties it all together. A must-read.”

—Dr. Mark Isley, Principal, Shelby County Alternative School, Alabama

“Those who seek meaning in their work and life will find much of value in this practical application of the wisdom of Dr. Frankl, so deeply experienced and artfully presented.”

—Dee Hock, Founder and CEO Emeritus, VISA

“Don’t let life just happen to you! Let Dr. Pattakos show you how to apply Viktor Frankl’s core principles to make your work—and life—more meaningful. Anyone from mail deliverer to CEO can embark on a path of self-discovery that will lead to better results and relationships with others.”

—Jean E. Spence, Executive Vice President, Global Technology and
Quality, Kraft Foods

“I fully recommend reading this great work and applying its wisdom. Please don’t wait to open your ‘lockbox’ of talents and tasks that life has set aside for you. Seek what is yours on behalf of all mankind.”

—Robert R. Thompson, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army

“Use *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* as a textbook, order it for all your employees, and buy a copy for yourself.”

—Erik Bergrud, Associate Vice President for Alumni, Constituent and Employer Relations, Park University, and Past President, American Society for Public Administration

“Dr. Pattakos provides a commonsense model to resolve the existential anxiety created by the gap between our thoughts and reality and to tremendously enrich our lives. Read *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* and be prepared to look in the mirror and see the person responsible for your dissatisfaction and unhappiness!”

—Vann E. Schaffner, MD, Spokane, Washington

“Every thinking person can benefit from the work of Alex Pattakos. As we wind our way through life’s challenges, understanding life’s choices and outcomes is foremost. This work adds a great deal of value to this most important of life’s searches.”

—Robert Agranoff, PhD, Professor Emeritus, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, Bloomington

“*Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is a must-read. Not only is it written in very direct, clear language to assert the case for each of us to follow the meaning in our lives, but it hits an intuitive nerve as Dr. Pattakos explains Viktor Frankl’s sources for authentic meaning in one’s life. This has been a major influence in creating a more rewarding life for me and countless others.”

—Michael E. Skaggs, Executive Director, Nevada Commission on Economic Development

“Alex Pattakos does a wonderful job of translating Frankl’s work into actions for living. He delivers an especially powerful message for individuals striving to grow both professionally and personally. I can think of no other book that better prepares leaders for facing tough challenges. This is a must-read for leaders!”

—Dr. Mitch Owen, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University

*Viktor Frankl's Principles
for Discovering Meaning in Life and Work*

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND EXPANDED

ALEX PATTAKOS, PhD

ELAINE DUNDON



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
a BK Life book

Prisoners of Our Thoughts

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This book is dedicated to

Viktor E. Frankl, MD, PhD (1905–1997)

and

Dr. Stephen R. Covey (1932–2012)

*whose lives and legacies will forever bring light
to darkness, as well as to all the people around
the world who are searching for meaning.*

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Applying the therapeutic system of world-renowned psychiatrist and existential philosopher Viktor E. Frankl, learn how to bring personal meaning and fulfillment to your everyday life and work and achieve your highest potential!

Core Principles

- ❶ **Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude.** In all situations, no matter how desperate they may appear or actually be, you always have the ultimate freedom to choose your attitude.
- ❷ **Realize your will to meaning.** Commit authentically to meaningful values and goals that only you can actualize and fulfill.
- ❸ **Detect the meaning of life's moments.** Only you can answer for your own life by detecting the meaning at any given moment and assuming responsibility for weaving your unique tapestry of existence.
- ❹ **Don't work against yourself.** Avoid becoming so fixated on an intent or outcome that you actually work against the desired result.
- ❺ **Look at yourself from a distance.** Only human beings possess the capacity to look at themselves from a distance, with a sense of perspective, including the uniquely human trait known as your sense of humor.
- ❻ **Shift your focus of attention.** Deflect your attention from the problem situation to something else and build your coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and change.
- ❼ **Extend beyond yourself.** Manifest the human spirit at work by directing your attention and relating to something more than yourself.

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Foreword

Shortly before Viktor Frankl's passing in September 1997, I had heard of his declining health, illness, and hospitalization. I was very anxious to talk with him so that I could express my profound gratitude for his life's work—for his impact on millions of people, including my own life and life's work. I understood that he had lost his sight and that his wife was reading to him several hours each day in the hospital. I will never forget the feeling of hearing his voice and visiting with him. He was so kind and gracious as he listened to my expressions of appreciation, esteem, and love. I felt as if I were speaking to a great and noble spirit. After patiently listening, he said, "Stephen, you talk to me as if I am ready to check out. I still have two important projects I need to complete." How true to form! How true to character! How true to the principles of Logotherapy!

Frankl's desire and determination to continue to contribute reminded me of his collaborative work with Dr. Hans Selye of Montreal, Canada—famous for his research and writings on stress. Selye taught that it is only when we have meaningful work and projects that our immune system is strengthened and the degenerative aging forces are slowed down. He called this kind of stress "eustress" rather than dis-

tress, which comes from a life without meaning and integrity. I'm sure these two souls influenced each other, reinforcing both the physical and psychological benefits of Logotherapy, of man's search for meaning.

When Alex Pattakos graciously invited me to write a foreword to *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* and told me that the Frankl family had suggested this to him, I was both honored and excited to participate—particularly since they felt my work with organizations in management and leadership beautifully paralleled Viktor Frankl's "principles at work," the heart of this splendid book. My sense of the significance of this book deepened further when Pattakos wrote me, "A year before he died, I was sitting with Dr. Frankl in his study and he grabbed my arm and said, 'Alex, yours is the book that needs to be written!'"

I will never forget how deeply moved and inspired I was in the sixties when I studied *Man's Search for Meaning* and also *The Doctor and the Soul*. These two books, along with Frankl's other writings and lectures, reaffirmed my "soul's code" regarding our power of choice, our unique endowment of self-awareness, and our essence, our will for meaning. While on a writing sabbatical in Hawaii and in a very reflective state of mind, I was wandering through the stacks of a university library and picked up a book. I read the following three lines, which literally staggered me and again reaffirmed Frankl's essential teachings:

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our
response.
In our response lies our growth and our happiness.*

I did not note the name of the author, so I've never been able to give proper attribution. On a later trip to Hawaii I even went back to find the source and found the library building itself was no longer present.

The space between what happens to us and our response, our freedom to choose that response and the impact it can have upon our lives, beautifully illustrate that we can become a product of our decisions, not our conditions. They illustrate the three values that Frankl continually taught: the creative value, the experiential value, and the attitudinal value. We have the power to choose our response to our circumstances. We have the power to shape our circumstances; indeed, we have the responsibility, and if we ignore this space, this freedom, this responsibility, the essence of our life and our legacy could be frustrated.

One time I was leaving a military base where I had been teaching principle-centered leadership over a period of time. As I was saying good-bye to the commander of that base, a colonel, I asked him, "Why would you undertake such a significant change effort to bring principle-centered living and leadership to your command when you know full well you will be swimming upstream against powerful cultural forces? You are in your thirtieth year and you are retiring at the end of this year. You have had a successful military career and you could simply maintain the successful pattern you've had and go into your retirement with all of the honors and the plaudits that come with your dedicated years of service." His answer was unforgettable. It seared itself into my soul. He said, "Recently, my father passed away. Knowing that he was dying, he called my mother and myself to his bedside. He

motioned to me to come close to him so that he could whisper something in my ear. My mother stood by, watching in tears. My father said, ‘Son, promise me you won’t do life like I did. Son, I didn’t do right by you or by your mother, and I never really made a difference. Son, promise me you won’t do life like I did.’”

This military commander said, “Stephen, that is why I am undertaking this change effort. That is why I want to bring our whole command to an entirely new level of performance and contribution. I want to make a difference, and for the first time I sincerely hope that my successors do better than I have. Up to this point, I had hoped that I would be the high-water mark, but no longer. I want to get these principles so institutionalized and so built into our culture that they will be sustainable and go on and on. I know it will be a struggle. I may even ask for an extension so that I can continue to see this work through, but I want to honor the greatest legacy that my father ever gave me, and that is the desire to make a difference.”

From this commander we learn that courage is not the absence of fear but the awareness there is something more important. We spend at least a third of our life either preparing for work or doing work, usually inside organizations. Even our retirement should be filled with meaningful projects, inside organizations or families or societies. Work and love essentially comprise the essence of mortality.

The great humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow came to similar thoughts near the end of his life, which essentially affirmed Frankl’s “will to meaning” theme. He felt that his own need hierarchy theory was too needs determined

and that self-actualization was not the highest need. In the end, he concluded that self-transcendence was the human soul's highest need, which reflected more the spirit of Frankl. Maslow's wife, Bertha, and his research associate put together his final thinking along these lines in the book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*.

My own work with organizations and with people in the world of work focuses a great deal on developing personal and organizational mission statements. I have found that when you get enough people interacting freely and synergistically, and when these people are informed about the realities of their industry or profession and their own culture, they begin to tap into a kind of collective conscience and awareness of the need to add value, to really leave a legacy, and they set up value guidelines to fulfill that legacy. Ends and means are inseparable; in fact, the ends preexist in the means. No worthy end can ever really be accomplished with unworthy means.

I have found in my teaching that the single most exhilarating, thrilling, and motivating idea that people have ever really seriously contemplated is the idea of the power of choice—the idea that the best way to predict their future is to create it. It is basically the idea of personal freedom, of learning to ask Viktor Frankl's question: What is life asking of me? What is this situation asking of me? It's more freedom *to* rather than freedom *from*. It's definitely an inside-out rather than an outside-in approach.

I have found that when people get caught up in this awareness, this kind of mindfulness, and if they genuinely ask such questions and consult their conscience, almost always

the purposes and values they come up with are transcendent—that is, they deal with meaning that is larger than their own life, one that truly adds value and contributes to other people’s lives—the kinds of things that Viktor Frankl did in the death camps of Nazi Germany. They break cycles; they establish new cycles, new positive energies. They become what I like to call “transition figures”—people who break with past cultural mindless patterns of behavior and attitude.

*The range of what we see and do
Is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice
That we fail to notice,
There is little we can do
To change
Until we notice
How failing to notice
Shapes our thoughts and deeds.*

—R. D. Laing

With this kind of thinking and with the seven magnificent principles Dr. Pattakos describes in this important book, a kind of primary greatness is developed where character and contribution, conscience and love, choice and meaning, all have their play and synergy with each other. This is contrasted with secondary greatness, being those who are successful in society’s eyes but personally unfulfilled.

Finally, let me suggest two ideas on how to get the very most from this book. First, share or teach the core principles, one by one, to those you live with and work around who might be interested. Second, live them. To learn something but not to do is really not to learn. To know something but

not to do is really not to know. Otherwise, if we just intellectualize these core principles and verbalize them but do not share and practice them, we would be like a person who is blind from birth explaining to another person what it means to see, based on an academic study of light, its properties, the eye and its anatomy. As you read this book, I challenge you to experience the freedom to choose your own attitude, to exercise your will to meaning, to detect the meaning of life's moments, to not work against yourself, to look at yourself from a distance, and to shift your focus of attention and extend beyond yourself. I suggest you consider learning this material sequentially, by reading the first principle, teaching it and applying it, then reading the next one, and so forth. You may want to simply read the entire book all at once to give yourself the overview, and then go back and learn the principles sequentially through your own experiencing. You will become a change catalyst. You will become a transition figure. You will stop bad cycles and start good ones. Life will take on a meaning as you've never known it before. I know this is so from my own experiences and from working with countless organizations and individuals in the world of work.

As my grandfather taught me, and as Viktor Frankl taught me, life is a mission, not a career.

Dr. Stephen R. Covey
Author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

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Preface

Soon after the initial release of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* in 2004, a massive earthquake under the Indian Ocean triggered one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history, known around the world as the Asian Tsunami. This tsunami killed 230,000 people and left 500,000 people homeless. Indonesia's Aceh province was closest to the epicenter of the quake and was hardest hit by the monster waves.

By chance, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* found its way into the hands of representatives from the Jakarta-based professional services firm Dunamis Organization Services. The company developed a Volunteers' Readiness Program to prepare individuals for what they would encounter while assisting in Aceh. The goal was to teach the volunteers how to respond quickly and effectively to the vast devastation and suffering they would encounter in the field. They also needed to know how to deal with their own psychological reactions. The program, which used *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* as a training resource, was employed by other organizations, including local government bodies and such nongovernmental organizations as UNESCO and UNICEF. All seven core principles described in this book were viewed as essential knowledge,

skills, and attitudes required by the volunteer aid workers participating in the readiness program.

In ways we cannot adequately express, this application of the principles in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* made the book's publication worthwhile—and yes, meaningful—to us. This was not an illustration of the principles in action that Alex had envisioned when he first conceptualized and wrote the book. Far from it! But since its original publication, we have learned that its application potential is unlimited, extending far beyond the realm of work and the workplace.

Not Just for Disasters

Prisoners of Our Thoughts has applications much closer to the lives of most of us. Are you toiling in a job you don't like? Or perhaps you feel the job is okay, but you are not fulfilled by the work? More broadly, do you wonder if there is more to life than what you are experiencing? Have you felt that bad things just happen to you, that your life is out of your control, and there is nothing you can do about it? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are not alone. It is natural to ask such fundamental questions about the way we live and work. This book, written with you in mind, deals with the human quest for meaning. It is grounded in the philosophy and approach of the world-renowned psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, author of the best-selling *Man's Search for Meaning*, which was named one of the ten most influential books in America by the Library of Congress. Frankl's many ideas about the search for meaning, illustrated by his own experiences and those of his clients/patients, have influenced millions around the world.

Frankl, a survivor of Nazi concentration camps during World War II, is most well known for his belief that no matter what challenges you face in life, you always have the ultimate freedom to choose your attitude and your response to what is happening to you. As a prisoner, many things were taken from Frankl: his wife and family, his identity (replaced with a number), his clothing, his health, and his freedom to come and go. Yet he realized that no matter what was happening around and to him, he still retained the capacity to choose his attitude and, by extension, his response. **Frankl knew that he was responsible for finding meaning in his circumstances and, importantly, for not becoming a prisoner of his thoughts.** In essence, choosing not to be a passive victim of his circumstances, he practiced an active approach to finding meaning. Similarly, all of us have the ability to respond to the challenges that come our way by exercising our capacity to find meaning. Fundamentally, Frankl believed that there is meaning in every moment of our lives—up to our very last breath—and that it is our personal responsibility to find it. He also underscored that we do not have to suffer in order to find or experience meaning.

Frankl is the founder of Logotherapy, a meaning-centered, humanistic approach to psychotherapy, which incorporates many insights including the freedom to choose one's attitude. We have reviewed Frankl's vast array of books, articles, speeches, and related works and have distilled his teachings into what we believe are the seven most important core principles to help you on your quest for meaning. The "freedom to choose your attitude" is just one of the seven principles that we share in this book. We have also provid-

ed a conceptual foundation as well as practical guidance for examining your own questions about meaning.

Our specific goal through this book is to bring meaning to work and the workplace. Because we define *work* very broadly, the message applies to a wide audience: to paid workers as well as to volunteers; to people employed in all sectors and industries; to individuals beginning a job search or a new career; to those in transition; and to retirees. Because the book demonstrates Frankl's principles at work in a general context, these core principles can be applied to life outside the workplace. Examples, stories, exercises, questions, challenges, and other practical tools help guide you in applying Frankl's ideas to finding your own path to meaning at work and in your personal life.

Alex's Perspective on Viktor Frankl

Frankl's influence on my work and personal life goes back almost fifty years. I spent many of these years studying his groundbreaking work in existential analysis, Logotherapy, and the search for meaning, and I have applied his principles in multiple work environments and situations. As a mental health professional, I have relied on the power of Frankl's ideas for years. My reliance has evolved and expanded over time as I have tested elements of his philosophy and approach in a wide variety of organizational settings. Working with individuals experiencing existential dilemmas at work and/or in their personal lives, I naturally have reflected on my own life journey and have frequently relied on and benefited from Frankl's wisdom.

Viktor Frankl practiced what he preached, living and



Dr. Alex Pattakos with Dr. Viktor Frankl in his study, Vienna, Austria, August 1996

working with meaning throughout his life. This is not always easy to do, as I know from personal experience. There is a saying in the academic world that we don't know what we don't know until we try to teach it. The same thing can be said about writing a book. And yet in many respects, *writing* a book is the easy part. The really hard part, I must confess, comes when we try to *do* what we write about. I can only try to follow Frankl's lead. It was in a meeting with Frankl at his home in Vienna, Austria, in 1996 when I first proposed the idea of writing a book that would apply his core principles and approach explicitly to work and the workplace. He was more than encouraging—in his typical passionate style, he leaned across his desk, grabbed my arm, and said, “Alex, yours is the book that needs to be written.” His words burned into the core of my being, and I was determined from that moment to make this book idea a reality.

I realize now more than ever the good fortune and benefit I have had of metaphorically standing on the shoulders of Viktor Frankl, one of the greatest thinkers of modern times. Through his own story of finding a reason to live despite

the horrendous circumstances of Nazi concentration camps, Frankl left a legacy that can help everyone, no matter what their situation, find deeper, richer meaning in their lives. It is my intention and hope that *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* builds upon Frankl's legacy of meaning in life and work, supporting his transformational legacy so it is never forgotten.

Welcome to the Third Edition

Today's fast-changing, increasingly complex, and uncertain world has amplified the interest in the search for meaning in life, work, and society. It is time to extend the life-affirming and inspirational messages from the first and second editions in this third edition. A key change in this edition is the addition of my partner, spouse, and muse, Elaine Dundon, as coauthor. Given her unique background in business, innovation, meaning, philosophy, and metaphysics, Elaine brings an interesting dynamic to this third edition.

Elaine's Perspective on Viktor Frankl

Frankl's influence on my work and personal life can be traced back to my adolescent years when I first read *Man's Search for Meaning*. Since then, I have revisited this seminal book for insights on how to deal with and find meaning in the challenging circumstances I've faced in my personal and work situations. Often I realized that I was a prisoner, not in the literal sense of being behind steel bars and barbed wire, but in the figurative sense of entrapping myself with limiting beliefs—not just about my own circumstances and abilities but also about how I held others as prisoners of my thoughts on how they might continue to behave. Fortuitously, I met

Alex Pattakos and subsequently learned of his interest in the areas of Logotherapy, existential analysis, and the search for meaning in life and work. Together, our odyssey has taken us around the world, where we have had the great fortune to meet so many people interested in sharing their views and insights on meaning and, specifically, on how Frankl's wisdom has helped them overcome challenging situations. It has been an honor and a privilege to advance Frankl's work and, of course, to share the journey with my husband, partner, and sage, Alex.

In this revised and expanded third edition we offer original and updated stories, fresh applications and exercises, and four new chapters ("Meaning at the Core: Life," "Meaning at the Core: Work," "Meaning at the Core: Society," and "Viktor Frankl's Legacy Continues"). We encourage you to *live this book* by reviewing the concepts and examples, practicing the exercises, and adopting the principles in your daily work and life. Only in this way will the book be more than just another book in your library. Only in this way will Frankl's voluminous body of work have the impact it deserves. Only in this way will this book help you truly find deeper meaning in your life and work.

Alex Pattakos, PhD
Elaine Dundon, MBA

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Life Doesn't Just Happen to Us

Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked.

In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.¹ (V. Frankl)

It seems that I (Alex) have known Viktor Frankl most of my life. It was in the late 1960s when I first became acquainted with his work and read his classic book *Man's Search for Meaning*. While on active duty with the U.S. Army, I received formal training at Brooke Army Hospital, now called Brooke Army Medical Center, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, as a social work/psychology specialist. In addition to the opportunity to work side by side with some of the best mental health professionals in the field, this unique learning experience fueled my passion for studying various schools of thought and practice in psychiatry and psychology. Frankl's work in particular had great resonance for me at that time, and it eventually became an integral part of both my personal and professional life.

Over the years, I have had many opportunities to apply

Frankl's teachings in my own life and work. In effect, I have field-tested the validity and reliability of his key principles and techniques, often in comparison with competing schools of thought and in situations that tested the limits of my personal resilience. It didn't take me long to realize the efficacy of his philosophy and approach, and I became a de facto practitioner of Logotherapy long before the idea for this book surfaced in my mind. Many decisive times in my life, including situations that involved work, could easily be described as turbulent and challenging. Such formidable, life-defining moments, although they often lasted much longer than a moment, required a great deal of soul-searching for answers. I remember how truly out of balance—and yes, even lost—I felt at those critical times. I had learned many years ago from Thomas Moore, psychotherapist and author of the best-selling book *Care of the Soul*, that our most soulful times are when we are out of balance rather than when we are in balance. It was especially during these meaning-centered moments, when I was out of balance, that I found myself putting Frankl's philosophy and approach into practice.

I was particularly out of balance in my early twenties, after graduating from college. I was contemplating going to law school after my military service. My father, an engineer, envisioned that someday I would work for him as an attorney specializing in contract law. With his help and at his urging, I took a job with a large engineering and construction firm in New Jersey. However, I did not see myself as a corporate lawyer. Fueled by my active duty with the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era, I was interested in law only as it could be used as an instrument for social policy and social change. This per-

spective did not bode well for my relationship with my father or my employer.

Although I felt trapped, Frankl's work reminded me that it was my own responsibility how I chose to react to the situation. I knew I had to maintain a positive, resilient attitude and that this experience—a kind of existential dilemma—was actually giving me an opportunity to clarify and confirm my values around the kind of work I wanted to do and *not* do. This meant leaving my relatively secure place of employment and, harder still, standing up to and engaging in many heated arguments with my father so that I could declare the path that *I* wanted to pursue. From this personal and stressful experience, however, I learned that it was worth the risk and effort! How I faced this difficult situation increased my personal resilience for handling other challenges I have encountered throughout my life.

*One may say that instincts are transmitted through the genes, and values are transmitted through traditions, but that meanings, being unique, are a matter of personal discovery.*² (V. Frankl)

I (Elaine) too have faced many situations when I felt out of balance or, in some cases, that I was in balance but the rest of the world was not. One day, years ago, at the age of twelve, when I was babysitting for the woman across the street from our home, she turned to me and said, "That's quite an ordeal your mother is facing." The look on my face must have registered confusion, for she responded, "Oh no. You don't know." She was correct, I did *not* know. I did not know that my mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer and the prognosis was not good. Survival was rare back then without

the medical treatments and psychological support that we are blessed with today. My parents had decided not to tell any of their children in an effort, I suppose, to protect us from the bad news. In hindsight, I realized that they also may have not known how to react and needed time to deal with their own fears. However, their decision not to discuss the illness simply served to amplify my fear and sense of loneliness, for there was no one to talk to about the situation.

Somehow, we all got through the storm. My mother survived another fourteen years due to her positive attitude, knowing that she needed to stay alive to guide her four children. She practiced Frankl's principles, most notably those of de-reflection (shifting her focus away from her illness onto things that mattered more—i.e., her children) and of self-detachment (looking at herself from a distance with a sense of perspective, including maintaining her sense of humor). I remember her reading Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* while sick in bed. I recall saying to her one day, with tears in my eyes, "I don't want you to die." She held my hand and said, jokingly, "But imagine if no one ever died. Imagine if five-hundred-year-olds, or even thousand-year-olds, were walking around the earth. It would be a very strange world!" In her own kind way, my mother was teaching me about the journey of life. Her courage, love, and wisdom did indeed guide me to put life's challenges in perspective and to find the meaning in any situation, however tragic.

*I am convinced that, in the final analysis, there is no situation that does not contain within it the seed of a meaning.*³
(V. Frankl)

Frankl's thinking has profoundly influenced both of our lives, including our work situations, over the years. This book is a product of our research on Frankl's teachings, including his personal encouragement, as well as our combined experiences applying these teachings in everyday life and work—for ourselves and with others.

In chapter 2 we explore Viktor Frankl's life path. A psychiatrist who suffered through imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, Frankl found meaning in spite of—and because of—the suffering all around him. His life's work resulted in the therapeutic approach called Logotherapy, which paved the way for us to know meaning as a foundation of our existence. Frankl was quick to say, however, that traumatic suffering is *not* a prerequisite for finding meaning in our lives. By this he meant that whenever we suffer—no matter what the severity of our suffering is—we have the ability to find meaning in the situation. We also have the ability to find meaning in the good times. Choosing to find meaning, under any circumstance, is the path to a meaningful life. As a mentor and author, and as the creator of Logotherapy, Frankl had a profound impact on many people during his lifetime. His teachings continue to guide and influence people around the world today.

Although Frankl produced a voluminous body of work, he did not distill his teachings down to a list of seven core principles. We have developed the seven principles that best describe his teachings. Throughout this book, we explore each principle one by one. They include:

PRINCIPLE 1. *Exercise the Freedom to Choose Your Attitude* (chapter 3)

We are all free to choose our attitude toward everything that happens to us. This concept is best described by Frankl's famous quotation in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*: "Everything can be taken from a man but . . . the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way."⁴

PRINCIPLE 2. *Realize Your Will to Meaning* (chapter 4)

Logotherapy, according to Frankl, "considers man as a being whose main concern consists of fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than in the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts."⁵ Rather than simply completing tasks to receive rewards such as money, influence, status, or prestige, we can realize our will to deeper meaning by making a conscious, authentic commitment to meaningful values and goals.

PRINCIPLE 3. *Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments* (chapter 5)

Meaning reveals itself to us in everyday life and work, in *all* of life's moments. The fundamental presumption is that only as individuals can we answer for our own lives, detecting in them each moment's meaning and weaving our own unique tapestry of existence.

PRINCIPLE 4. *Don't Work Against Yourself* (chapter 6)

Sometimes our most fervent desires and intentions are thwarted by our obsession with outcomes.

Frankl calls this form of self-sabotage *hyperintention*. In some instances, we actually get results exactly opposite to what we intended, which is called *paradoxical intention*. We can learn to see how we are working against ourselves and focus instead on creating the conditions we want in our lives and work.

PRINCIPLE 5. *Look at Yourself from a Distance* (chapter 7)

Frankl observed: “Only man owns the capacity to detach himself from himself. To look at himself out of some perspective or distance.”⁶ This notion of *self-detachment* can help us lighten up and not sweat the small stuff. This capacity includes the uniquely human trait known as a sense of humor. Frankl noted that “no animal is capable of laughing, least of all laughing *at itself* or *about itself*.”⁷ We can learn to look at ourselves from a distance to gain insight and perspective, including laughing at ourselves!

PRINCIPLE 6. *Shift Your Focus of Attention* (chapter 8)

When Viktor Frankl was a prisoner in the Nazi concentration camps, in order to cope with stress, suffering, and conflict, he learned to shift his attention away from the painful situation to other, more appealing circumstances. We can learn to shift our focus accordingly when we are coping with difficult situations.

PRINCIPLE 7. *Extend Beyond Yourself* (chapter 9)

Frankl wrote: “Love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. . . . The salvation of man is through love and in love.”⁸ Extending beyond ourselves,

connecting with and being of service to others, no matter what the situation or scale, is where our deepest meaning can be realized. Self-transcendence, by relating and being directed to something greater than ourselves, provides a pathway to ultimate meaning.

These seven core principles support Frankl's key message that we always have the ability to respond to anything that comes our way in life by exercising our capacity to find meaning. Life doesn't just happen to us—we are responsible for our own lives, and it is up to us, like Frankl was able to do even in the Nazi death camps, to actively find meaning in our lives. We cannot be victims, we cannot be passive participants in life and, most of all, we cannot be *prisoners of our thoughts*!

In chapter 10 (“Meaning at the Core: Life”), chapter 11 (“Meaning at the Core: Work”), and chapter 12 (“Meaning at the Core: Society”), we share how Frankl's teachings, along with insights from our own research, writing, and experiences, can help us focus upon and find deeper meaning in life, work, and society. Another key message in this book from Frankl's teachings and our related work is that meaning must be at the *foundation* or *core* of one's life, which includes one's broadly defined work life. Without an understanding of meaning in our lives and work, we are simply like a boat being tossed around at sea without any true connection to others and without a clear direction or purpose to guide us through life's odyssey.

There is a crisis of meaning in the world today. Many people have told us that they feel something is missing. They feel overwhelmed, lonely, and unfulfilled. Generally, they

feel disconnected and not fully engaged with their lives or work. Depression is on the rise, and many people simply can't cope with the pace of change brought on by technological, cultural, and social transformations. The relentless pursuit of pleasure and other short-term escapes have only led to even more emptiness. We are told to pursue "happiness," yet happiness is an illusion for many, as it does not take into consideration the natural flow or rhythms of life—the ups and the downs, the joys and the sorrows, the good times and the not-so-good times.

To pursue "happiness" leaves us even more depressed when the state of our lives doesn't measure up to our expectations or falls short of the glorified lives we so often see on Facebook and other social media. The pursuit of power and influence is another illusion. Power is about being strong and dominant, having or trying to have control over others or other things. The pursuit of wealth can be viewed as another form of the pursuit of power. Ultimately, the pursuit of power only leads to frustration because one can never truly control other people or events. A wise person knows that one's only real power lies *within* and *over* oneself.

In chapters 10, 11, and 12, we highlight our work in a new discipline we call MEANINGology®—that is, the study and practice of meaning in life, work, and society. While many people define meaning as "significance" or "something that matters," we delve deeper, in a Logotherapeutic or existential sense, to consider the metaphysical aspects of the entire study of meaning. We define *meaning* as "resonance with our true nature or core essence." When something feels significant or we know that it matters, it is because it reso-

nates with who we truly are. *Core essence* is what defines us and is at the heart of what makes us unique as human beings. This deeper definition of meaning can apply to our personal and work lives, to organizations, and to societies as a whole. It is also beneficial to look at the converse—identifying what is *meaningless* to us or what does *not* resonate with our true nature or core essence. This exercise, among other things, helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the sources of meaning throughout our lives and work.

Another aspect of our MEANINGology work highlighted in chapters 10, 11, and 12 centers on our “formula” for discovering meaning in life and work. While the seven core principles help to focus the learning and discussion of Viktor Frankl’s teachings in Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, we felt that there was need for more clarification and guidance on how to put into action the human quest for meaning both individually and collectively. Through our research and experience, we have discovered three elements for finding deeper meaning that can be viewed as an integration, simplification, and extension of the seven Logotherapeutic principles described in the earlier chapters. These three elements are:

- Connect meaningfully with others (O).
- Engage with deeper purpose (P).
- Embrace life with attitude (A).

These elements spell “OPA!”—an easy-to-remember, simple acronym. This mantra for living and working can provide further insights on one’s path to meaning. We provide more

details about the OPA formula and its practical application in chapters 10, 11, and 12.

Finally, in chapter 13 (“Viktor Frankl’s Legacy Continues”), we highlight how Dr. Frankl’s legacy continues to expand around the world as the seeds of his System of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis find new soil in which to be planted, cultivated, and harvested. The information contained in this last chapter serves to illustrate that Frankl’s memory is eternal, that his wisdom is ageless, and that his life’s work continues to influence humanity in significant (i.e., meaningful) ways. But for now, let’s take an initial look at Viktor Frankl’s life, explore more fully the foundations of his meaning-centered approach, and learn how all of us can apply his groundbreaking philosophy in our own lives.

Meaning Reflections

At the end of each chapter, we have added a section in this third edition called Meaning Reflections, which includes a Meaning Moment Exercise, Meaning Questions, and a Meaning Affirmation—all designed to help you incorporate the key lessons of each chapter into your own life and work.



Meaning Moment Exercise

Write down the details of a situation, either in your personal or work life, involving another person whom you have viewed as being particularly negative. Now write down the details of the situation from the other person’s point of view. How do these two descriptions differ? Do you view yourself as a victim of circumstances that are outside of your control, or are

you in some way responsible for part or all of what happened? What can you learn from this negative situation? What could you have done differently, and what would you do differently if a similar situation were to occur again?

Meaning Questions

- Are you a prisoner of your thoughts?
- Do you hold *other* people (coworkers, family members, friends) prisoners of your thoughts?
- How can you find more meaning in your life and work?

Meaning Affirmation

I will take an active role in and take responsibility for my life as well as exercise my capacity to find meaning, because I know that life doesn't just happen to me.

Viktor Frankl

*I do not forget any good deed done to me,
and I carry no grudge for a bad one.*¹ (V. Frankl)

Viktor E. Frankl was born in Vienna, Austria, on March 26, 1905. It was the day Beethoven died, and in Frankl's autobiography he is quick to note this coincidence and reveal his sense of humor by sharing a comment made by one of his schoolmates: "One mishap comes seldom alone."² Frankl's father, who had been forced to drop out of medical school for financial reasons, was a public servant who instilled in the young Viktor a firm sense of social justice. For thirty-five years Viktor's father worked for the department of child protection and youth welfare. Viktor's mother, with whom he was very close, helped him develop his emotional side—the feelings and human connectedness that would inform his work as deeply as did his rationality.

Frankl was the second of three children, and at an early age he was afflicted with perfectionism. "I do not even speak to myself for days," he said, referring to his anger at himself

for not always being perfect. His astonishing and precocious interests in learning about human motivations led him to write to the well-known Viennese psychiatrist and “father of psychoanalysis” Sigmund Freud, with whom he had a correspondence throughout his high school years. Unfortunately this correspondence was lost years later to the Gestapo, the secret-police organization in Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe.

Young Frankl’s own search for meaning was already under way. He had become convinced that the human spirit is what makes us unique and that reducing life and human nature to “nothing but,” along the lines of many existentialist philosophers and psychiatrists of his time, denied or discounted any such spirit. At sixteen, he gave his first public lecture, “On the Meaning of Life.” Two years later, he wrote “On the Psychology of Philosophical Thought,” for his high school graduation essay. It was almost as though on some level Frankl was preparing for the tragedy that lay ahead and the future role he would play in giving hope to all of humankind after the hopelessness and despair of the Holocaust.

In 1924, at Freud’s request, Frankl published his first article in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He was nineteen years old and had already developed two of his fundamental ideas: First, we ourselves are responsible for our own existence, and we must answer the question that life asks us about the meaning of our own lives. Second, although ultimate meaning is beyond our comprehension and must remain so, we must have faith in meaning as we pursue it. Also in 1924, Frankl started his medical studies, and his growing professional recognition included a developing relationship with

renowned psychiatrist Alfred Adler. It was Adler who invited him to publish another article, this time in the *International Journal of Individual Psychology*. Frankl still was only twenty years old.

Logotherapy

A year later, during public lectures in Germany, Frankl used the word *Logotherapy* for the first time. He chose this name for his unique approach to a humanistic form of psychotherapy, which came to be known as the “Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy” (the predecessors being the Freudian and Adlerian Schools). This system of psychotherapy paved the way for us to know meaning as the foundation of our existence. Frankl chose this name with direct reference to the Greek word *logos* (λόγος) for several reasons. One was the fact that the most frequent, though rough, English translation of *logos* as “the meaning” best fit his paradigm of “therapy through meaning.” We should mention that Frankl was not referring to our modern interpretation and use of the word or term *logos*, which many know as a graphic symbol of a trademark, product, or company name designed for easy recognition. Although this contemporary definition can be associated with the original Greek word by linking the graphic symbol to the deeper meaning of a product or company, Frankl certainly was not speaking about graphically designed logos and our modern-day marketing practices.

Upon closer examination, the various translations of the word *logos* reveal that it has deep spiritual roots.³ One of the first references to *logos* as “spirit” came from the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus around 500 BC. The *logos* of

Heraclitus has been interpreted in various ways: as “the logical,” as “meaning,” and as “reason.” To Heraclitus, the *logos* was responsible for the harmonic order of the universe, a cosmic law that declared, “One Is All and Everything Is One.” He believed that there was an order to the universe and a reason for things being the way they are. We can find deeper understanding, and thus meaning in our lives and work, if we start by doing what Heraclitus suggested: believing that all things are connected.

The concept of *logos* can also be found in many of the great literary works of Western philosophy and religion. The doctrine of the *logos* was the linchpin of the religious thinking by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who clearly established it as belonging to the spiritual realm. Indeed, for Philo the *logos* was divine—it was the source of energy from which the human soul became manifest. To Philo, the origins of *logos* as “spirit” and “life energy” were clearly established and well documented in the writings of the early Greek philosophers and the theologians of his era.⁴

It is no coincidence that the concept and process of dialogue, a core methodological component of Frankl’s Logotherapy, likewise is grounded in the *logos*. The word *dialogue* comes from two Greek words: *dia* (δια), meaning “passing through,” and *logos*, translated as “meaning” or “spirit.” The process of dialogue takes on a new and deeper meaning when it is perceived as accessing a pool of common spirit (*logos*) through a genuine connection between people. This suggests more than collective thinking or simply arriving at a common understanding or shared meaning of something. Authentic dialogue enables individuals to acknowledge hon-

estly that each is part of a greater whole, that they naturally resonate with others within this whole, and that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its various parts. As participants in such a holistic process, together they can produce greater results than they would just as individuals without this meaningful connection.

As we can see, Logotherapy was an appropriate name for Frankl's unique and very humanistic approach to inspiring us to search for and find deeper meaning in our lives and work. It should be noted that he was not an advocate for the practices of traditional psychotherapy at that time, for he felt that many practitioners tended to focus only on a certain aspect of a person's life without regard for his or her whole life. He felt this "reductionist" approach was limited and in some ways dehumanizing. Frankl's work acknowledged human weakness, but it went further—to search for and acknowledge the underlying meaning behind these weaknesses. This approach highlighted the potential benefit to be had when we learn from and even transform our weaknesses. Frankl believed that every event, whether seen as positive or negative, could teach us something about ourselves and our world. "I am convinced," he wrote in his autobiography, "that, in the final analysis, there is no situation that does not contain within it the seed of a meaning."⁵

Frankl encountered many challenges as he attempted to gain support for his innovative meaning-centered therapeutic approach. By the time he received his medical degree in 1930, he had been banished from the Adler circle because he supported an alternative point of view about the fundamental nature of human motivations. His unique existential philoso-

phy also forced him to leave the Freudian circle. As it turned out, the experience of having to leave both well-established camps only helped to pave the way for Frankl to develop his own school of thought and psychotherapeutic approach.

At an early age, Frankl had already gained an international reputation for his work in youth counseling, and from 1930 to 1938 he was on the staff of the psychiatric University Clinic in Vienna. By 1938 he had an established private practice in neurology and psychiatry. However, World War II started, and the Germans invaded Austria. During the early part of the war, Frankl and his family were afforded a measure of protection because of his position as chief of the neurological department at Rothschild Hospital, the only Jewish hospital in Vienna. During this time, he risked his life and saved the lives of many others. On some occasions he used false diagnoses to sabotage the Nazi's efforts to euthanize mentally ill patients. It was during this period that he started writing his first book, *The Doctor and the Soul*.

In September 1942, Frankl and his family were arrested and deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp near Prague. This was the beginning of three dark years of imprisonment during which Frankl lost his wife, Tilly, his parents, and his brother to the horrors of the Nazi prison camps. He was incarcerated at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, and finally at Türkheim, where he nearly died from typhoid fever. The Nazis had confiscated the manuscript of his first book, *The Doctor and the Soul*, but Frankl was able to reconstruct it on bits of paper stolen from the camp office. In his autobiography he recollected: "I am convinced that I owe my survival, among other things, to my resolve to reconstruct that lost manuscript."⁶

After his release at the end of the war, Frankl wrote about his experiences in the concentration camps in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He wrote graphically and unflinchingly about the treatment, torture, and murder of the prisoners. He also described the beauty of the human spirit, however—how it could transcend the horror and find meaning under the most unimaginable circumstances. Frankl's experiences and observations reinforced the principles of meaning he had developed in his youth. In the death camps of Nazi Germany, he saw men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. "They may have been few in number," he wrote, "but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."⁷

This statement is perhaps one of the most often quoted passages from Frankl's work. U.S. Senator John McCain, for example, attributed his own survival as a prisoner of war in Vietnam for five and a half years in large part to the learning he acquired from Frankl's experience and teachings. In fact, McCain began the preface to his 1999 memoir, *Faith of My Fathers*, with the same Frankl quotation. In Frankl's words: "You do not have to suffer to learn. But, if you don't learn from suffering, over which you have no control, then your life becomes truly meaningless. . . . The way in which a man accepts his fate—those things beyond his control—can add a deeper meaning to his life. He controls how he responds."⁸

At the end of the war, as a survivor and as a psychiatrist, Frankl knew that his theories of Logotherapy had greater authenticity and ever-deeper meaning. He wrote about the

ongoing nightmares resulting from his experiences, but he knew those experiences laid the groundwork for his belief in self-transcendence and the will to meaning:

*I can see beyond the misery of the situation to the potential for discovering a meaning behind it, and thus to turn an apparently meaningless suffering into a genuine human achievement. I am convinced that, in the final analysis, there is no situation that does not contain within it the seed of a meaning.*⁹ (V. Frankl)

Frankl returned to Vienna after the war and became director of the Vienna Neurological Policlinic, a position he held for twenty-five years. He started a long and distinguished academic career that took him to the University of Vienna, Harvard University, and many other universities throughout the world. He received twenty-nine honorary doctorates during his life and wrote thirty-two books, which have been translated into twenty-seven languages. His *Man's Search for Meaning* is considered by the Library of Congress to be one of the ten most influential books in America. Because he went through the hell of despair over the apparent meaninglessness of life—and struggled with the pessimism associated with such a reductionist and ultimately nihilistic view of life—Frankl was able to fully develop and refine his therapeutic system of Logotherapy. At a conference in San Diego in 1980, Frankl said that he had wrestled with this view that undercut faith in life's meaning, like Jacob did with the angel, until he could “say yes to life in spite of everything.” Interestingly, an earlier version of *Man's Search for Meaning* had this very quotation as its title.

In 1992 the Viktor Frankl Institute was established in Vienna. Today the institute continues to serve as the center of a worldwide network of research and training institutes

and societies dedicated to advancing his philosophy and therapeutic system of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. Viktor Frankl died peacefully on September 2, 1997, at the age of ninety-two. He remained creative, productive, and passionate to the end of his life.

Meaning Reflections



Meaning Moment Exercise

Recall a situation in your personal life or work in which you felt trapped, confined, or imprisoned. Perhaps you just didn't have the freedom or authority to deal with the situation in the way that ideally you would have liked. What, if anything, did you do about it? As you think about the situation now, what did you learn from it? In hindsight, what could you have done differently?

Meaning Questions

- Consider the hardships you have experienced in your personal and work life. How might Frankl's experience in the concentration camps help you deal with such hardships (to settle the memories of the past and to deal with challenges in the present and the future)?
- What is your vision of the kind of work that you really want to do and the kind of life that you really would like to live?

Meaning Affirmation

I will appreciate the freedom I do have in my life.

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