

# Viktor Frankl & Logotherapy

*Jocelyn, Kate, & Angelina*



# Viktor Emil Frankl

March 26, 1905- Sept. 2, 1997

Born and died in Vienna

Second child of Gabriel &  
Elsa Frankl

# Professional Life

- Interested in philosophy and psychology
  - Focused specifically on depression and suicide
- Worked as head of suicide prevention department at General Hospital in Vienna
- Later became head of neurological department at Rothschild Hospital

# Surviving the Holocaust

- 1942 - Viktor and family forced to enter a concentration camp
- Spent next 3 years in various camps, unable to contact his family
- Would encourage others to focus on positive thinking in order to avoid suicide attempts
- Liberated from camp on April 27, 1945
  - Learns of the deaths of his family members, including his wife Tilly

# Post-Holocaust

- Becomes Director of Vienna Neurological Polyclinic, which he remained for 25 years
- Receives a teaching position at U. of Vienna Medical School in 1946
- Gets his Ph.D. in Philosophy
- Creates Austrian Medical Society for Psychotherapy
- Becomes Visiting Professor at various Universities across the U.S., including Harvard

Marries second wife,  
Eleanore, in 1947.

Their daughter,  
Gabriele, is born that  
same year.



Imagno via Getty Images



# Existential Therapy

- Existential philosophy: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Buber, Heidegger, etc
- 2 orientations: Continental/European and the US school of thought
  - Continental/European - emphasizes the limitations of the tragedy of the human condition
    - Rollo May: Evil is a part of the individual and inherent in the human condition. We must learn to understand and balance both good and evil.
  - US - emphasizes human potential and encounter (think: Rogers and Maslow)
    - Humans are “essentially constructive in their fundamental nature, but damaged by their experience” - Carl Rogers

# Existential Therapy (cont'd)

- Basic Philosophy:
  - Humans are free, responsible for their own lives, and have the potential for self actualization
  - Motivation: “To live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering” - Frankl
  - Frankl - Each individual has an ultimate, true calling. It is the task of the individual to discover it.
    - No creation, simply discovery
    - 3 routes:
      - By creating a work or doing a deed
      - By experiencing something or encountering someone
      - By the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering



# Existential Therapy (cont'd)

- Unconscious: the true nature of our existence - we are finite beings alone in a meaningless world
- 4 Ultimate Concerns:
  - Death - The awareness of death gives meaning to life.
  - Freedom - The individual is entirely responsible for, and the author of, his or her own world, choices, and actions.
  - Meaning - Each individual's meaning is unique and found only as a result of difficult searching and unavoidable suffering.
  - Isolation - We are always and ultimately alone.

*“A phenomenological-personal psychotherapy with the aim of enabling a person to experience his or her life freely at the spiritual and emotional levels, to arrive at authentic decisions and to come to a responsible way of dealing with himself or herself and the world around them.” (Längle, p.5, 2005, as cited in Oliver)*

# Simba is your client!

## Remember the Disney movie, “The Lion King?”

1. How would you conceptualize Simba as your client using Logotherapy?
2. Give examples of how you might use dereflection, paradoxical intention, and Socratic dialogue with Simba.
3. If the characters in the Lion King represented aspects of Logotherapy, which character would represent what concept?

# Lion King Logotherapy

- Simba= Mankind searching for meaning
- Zazoo= Psyche (mind)
- Scar= Existential Frustration
- Rafiki= Logotherapist: dereflection, paradoxical intention
- Nala= Love/Simba finding meaning through love.
- Time spent with Pumba & Timone= Existential Vacuum
- Pumba and Timone= Humor
- Mufasa= Meaning from within, life is finite.

# Pop Quiz!

1. The emphasis of logotherapy is the search for meaning, which is not necessarily the search for \_\_\_\_\_ or any other supernatural being.

Borrowed from: <http://quiz.thefullwiki.org/> (Logotherapy: Quiz.)

# Question #1 Answers

- A. Nonthesim
- B. Theology
- C. God
- D. Pantheism

And the answer is....

C!

(If you said C, then go you! )

# Question 2

2. Logotherapy was developed by psychiatrist and neurologist \_\_\_\_\_.

# Was it...?

A. Sigmund Freud

B. Viktor Frankl

C. Alfred Adler

D. Albert Ellis



# Question #2 Answer

The answer is... our main man Viktor Frankl!

**B!**

# Question # 3

3. Logotherapy focuses on the will to

\_\_\_\_\_.

# Question 3 Answers

- A. Power
- B. Freedom
- C. Pleasure
- D. Meaning

**\*Drumroll....\***

**D! Meaning!**

# Question #4

4. “Noos” is a Greek word meaning \_\_\_\_\_.

# Question 4 Answers

- A. Spirit
- B. Body
- C. Mind
- D. Heart

Survey says...

**A! Spirit!**

# Question #5

5. Frankl specifically says the ways to find meaning are all ***except***:



# Answers to #5

- A. Loving someone
- B. Reproducing
- C. Accomplishing something
- D. Suffering

Which one of these is not like the others?

**B!**

# Question #6

6. Which orientation describes the human condition of one in which we are both inherently good and inherently evil?

# Answers to #6

- A. US school of thought
- B. Continental/European

And the answer is...

**B!**

# Question #7

7. Choose the four ultimate concerns from the following list.

# Answers to #7

A. Meaning

B. Death

C. Happiness

D. Freedom

E. Failure

F. Belongingness

G. Stability

H. Love

I. Wealth

J. Spirituality

K. Watermelon

L. Isolation

Annnnnnnndddd....

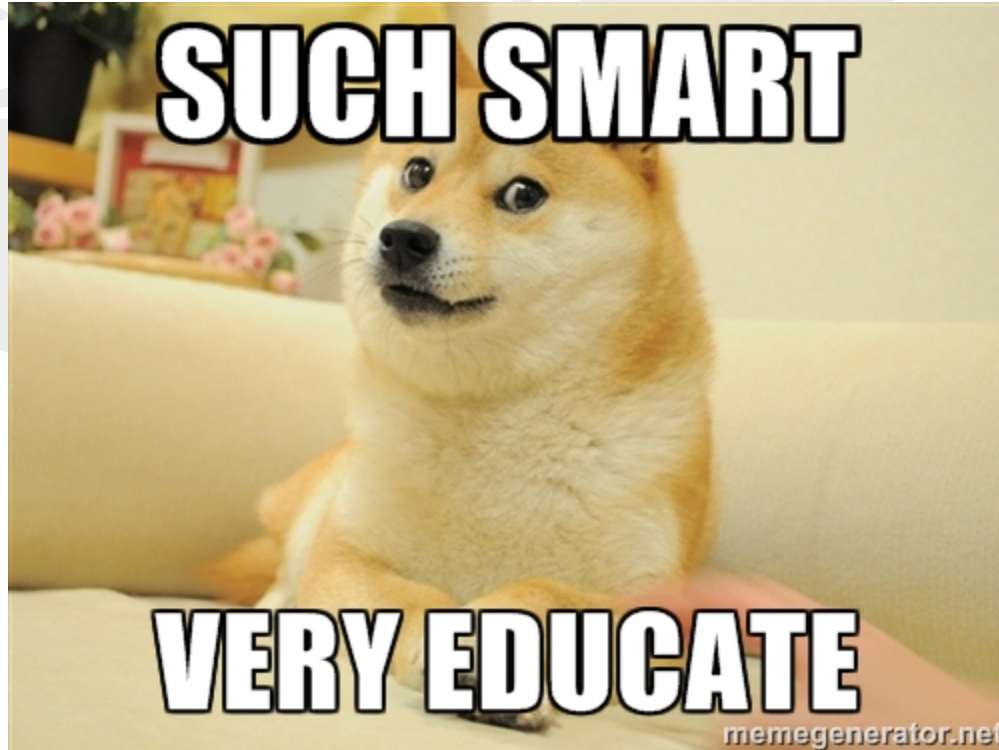
A, B, D, L

And what does that spell.....?

**BALD!**



Good Job!



# Man's Search for Meaning

“... I was struggling to find the *reason* for my sufferings, my slowly dying. In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious ‘Yes’ in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose” (p. 60).

# Man's Search for Meaning

3 phases of life in a concentration camp:

- Period following admission
  - Shock, denial; also curiosity
- Period once well-entrenched in camp routine
  - Apathy
- Period following release and liberation
  - Bitterness, depersonalization, distorted morals, survivor disillusionment

# Man's Search for Meaning

To avoid apathy and bitterness for survivors:

- Think of those you would not want to disappoint
- Reflect on how you would want them to perceive you

# Man's Search for Meaning

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the ideas presented in Frankl's book? Discuss your answer.
2. Were there any paradoxical examples about human nature presented in Man's Search for Meaning?
3. Over time, the prisoners became apathetic to suffering. Do you think this was necessary for survival in the camps?
4. Explain how the mind, body, and willpower can interact using examples.
5. How did love help Frankl persevere?

# Interested in Learning More?

Viktor Frankl Institute- Vienna:

<http://www.viktorfrankl.org/e/>

Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy:

[http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/Continuing\\_Education\\_Program.html](http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/Continuing_Education_Program.html)

Zur Institute:

[http://www.zurinstitute.com/logotherapy\\_course.html](http://www.zurinstitute.com/logotherapy_course.html)

# References

Oliver, M. *Existential approach to group therapy* [PowerPoint Presentation]. Retrieved from <http://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/mark.oliver/lectures-for-lifespan-psychology/powerpoint-on-existential-group-therapy>.