

#1 THE MEANING DIFFERENCE CONVERSATION

Thread 1: New Opportunities to discover THE MEANING DIFFERENCE

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue Dec 27, 2005 9:22 am Post subject: New Opportunities to discover THE MEANING DIFFERENCE



New Opportunities to discover THE MEANING DIFFERENCE

Hello and welcome!

The new year offers an opportunity for you to find deeper meaning and fulfillment in your life and work-----and for us to take this discussion to places we haven't so far. I want to invite you to participate in several new ways:

➡ **The MEANING DIFFERENCE BLOG**

Here I plan to continue to seed the dialogue and hope you'll visit to add your comments, ask questions and share your MEANING-full stories.

<http://globaldialoguecenter.blogs.com/meaning>

➡ **Exploring THE MEANING DIFFERENCE Survey**

Share your opinions and experiences to help all of us learn more about finding deeper meaning and fulfillment in our lives and work.

http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/meaning_survey_0506.html

➡ **The MEANING DIFFERENCE RESOURCES**

Viktor Frankl's landmark work provides many timeless resources to help us find deeper meaning and fulfillment. I invite you to visit the Viktor Frankl COLLECTION at the Global Dialogue Center. I am honored to serve as HOST for this ongoing array of Viktor Frankl resources. I also have a new central place at the Global Dialogue Center to share other MEANING-full resources with you, including a new PODCAST coming in January 2006.

Here are the links:

Viktor Frankl COLLECTION

<http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/viktorfranklcollection.html>

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D. at the Global Dialogue Center

<http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/alex pattakos>

I look forward to seeing YOU!

Meaning-fully,
Alex



Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*
founder, Center for Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.centerformeaning.com

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Learn more or buy a copy of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* from Amazon.com

#2 APPLYING VIKTOR FRANKL PRINCIPLES TO LIFE AND WORK

Thread 1: The Apprentice Finale: Undermining the Will to Meaning

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Fri Dec 16, 2005 3:11 pm Post subject: The Apprentice Finale: Undermining the Will to Meaning

I don't know about you, but I was extremely disappointed with the way that Randal Pinkett ended his stint as a candidate for Donald Trump's "apprentice." After so many weeks of espousing his core values about work and life, and leaving the impression that his integrity was beyond reproach, Randal, when given the opportunity to make his mark as a true champion of "diversity" and the "will to meaning," decided to regress towards the mean and apparently reveal his true colors.

If you didn't see any of the fourth season of the "Apprentice," especially the show's finale on Thursday, this posting may not mean much to you. This said, the "lessons learned" are no less important in a dialogue about meaning in life and at work. You see, the final two candidates were both identified by "The Donald" himself as being **stars** and even though Randal was selected as the "winner" of the competition, it was clear that both candidates were more than well qualified to work for the Trump organization. Indeed, Trump even opened up the possibility that both candidates would be hired to work on separate projects-itself an innovation for such a "reality" TV program.

What was most disheartening is the fact that Randal who, prior to the final announcement, had touted his main competitor, colleague, and "friend," Rebecca Jarvis, as a deserving winner, turned his back on her when given the chance to make "history" and, among other things, set a new standard for business collaboration between the genders. In short, Randal chose "power" over "meaning" and sacrificed the respect of so many viewers who had supported him up to that point.

And since neither Donald Trump nor his business associates chose to raise the issue of Randal's "moral compass," in my opinion, only Rebecca ended the show with dignity and respect. Indeed, had the tables been turned, I wonder what Rebecca would have done. The "will to meaning" is about the *authentic commitment to meaningful values and goals*. I'd be interested to know if you think that Randal realized his will to meaning. And what about Rebecca, what are you thoughts (and feelings) about how she handled this situation? Really, what you YOU think?!

Thread 3: The SEARCH FOR MEANING AT WORK

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Mon Nov 07, 2005 4:19 pm Post subject: The SEARCH FOR MEANING AT WORK

Hello to all of you,

The article below has messages that are particularly timely. With all that is going on in our communities, workplaces and in the world, searching for meaning in our *work* has a new significance.

Also, I invite you to visit the [Viktor Frankl COLLECTION](#) here at the Global Dialogue Center. You'll find other information and resources to support your quest for meaning. In particular, I hope you will stop by to see the information on the **Statue of Responsibility**. The final paragraph in my article below is highlighted with a special emphasis on the word RESPONSIBILITY, because it is central to Viktor Frankl's principles. When you visit the collection, you'll see how his conviction is now inspiring a whole new opportunity for us all to come together.

I hope you'll take time to think about your search for meaning in your work and write back to me to share your comments. I will be checking in from time-to-time and look forward to reading your thoughts.

Meaning-fully,
Alex



Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
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Learn more or buy a copy of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* from Amazon.com

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THE SEARCH FOR MEANING AT WORK

When one considers the amount of time that most people spend "at work" during their lifetime, it is no wonder that the search for meaning in a work context is so vitally important. However, when the question of personal meaning arises---and it seems to do so more and more in the so-called post-modern era-work and the workplace still are viewed

only infrequently as legitimate sources of reply. For many people, it is as if authentic meaning only happens outside of the so-called work environment!

It should be emphasized up front that the notion of work, as used here, is defined broadly and encompasses both paid and "unpaid" (i.e., volunteer) situations or arrangements. Moreover, when I speak of "work", I am including not simply being in the employ of someone else but also various forms of self-employment, such as operating home-based businesses or serving as independent consultants, "free agents", and other manifestations of the entrepreneurial spirit. Work and the work "place", in this regard, comprise an all encompassing condition from which very few, if any, people over the course of their lives are able to avoid.

It is against this backdrop that the search for meaning unfolds, both in terms of finding meaning in and through work itself and in terms of creating meaningful workplaces. As we will see below, the search for meaning at work can also be viewed as a spiritual quest, one that allows human beings to become fully "alive", wherever and whatever their work may happen to be. In this regard, Anita Roddick, the founder of The Body Shop, has said that all people want is to be alive in the workplace. While this may not appear to be rocket science, in many ways, it is a concept that is more difficult to understand and practice than rocket science. In rocket science, one plus one equals two. The dynamics of human affairs, on the other hand, offer little assurance that such principles can be applied consistently and with any degree of precision. The mystery surrounding a topic like the "search for meaning at work" makes it difficult for many people, particularly those concerned with "traditional" business practices, to pay credence to it as an operating value that can be readily translated into bottomline results.

Nevertheless, the quest for meaning at work is becoming a hot topic and, I suspect, will only get hotter. People in all walks of life are becoming more comfortable asking the "BIG" questions, that is, those that deal with their meaning and purpose in life and work, as witnessed by the number of self-help books, organizations, and online support groups that have mushroomed in recent years. The popular media, both electronic and printed, have contributed (or perhaps have reacted) to this meaning-centered dialogue in ways that appear to have only accelerated its growth, intensity, and popular acceptance.

Significantly, it was Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, the founder of Existential Analysis and Logotherapy, who espoused that "man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life." And it is this key principle, Dr. Frankl called it our will to meaning, that prompted me over the years to explore the existential needs and preferences of people at work. Indeed, like the other readers of this Newsletter, I have always been fascinated by how people are able (or unable) to bring personal meaning and fulfillment to their work and everyday lives. Here, I would like to explore briefly the "sources" of meaning that are associated with work and the workplace, as well as advocate for increased attention to the search for meaning in the contemporary era.

Sources of Meaning in Work

Among the foundational building blocks of Dr. Viktor Frankl's Existential Analysis and Logotherapy is the commitment to meaningful values and goals. In brief, Dr. Frankl identified three categories of values that, when actualized, provide sources of authentic meaning: creative values, that is, "by doing or creating something; experiential values, that is, "by experiencing something or encountering someone"; and attitudinal values, that is, "by choosing one's attitude toward suffering." Actualizing such values is not only the quid pro quo of the human quest for meaning but also provides a useful point of reference for reflecting upon the search for meaning at work.

Creative Values

Everyone, in one way or another, draws meaning from doing something or creating something of value. In this regard, the desire to "make a difference" through work is a (if not the) primary source of authentic meaning. Many individuals, in this connection, are focused on their personal "legacy" and want genuinely to leave their mark on the planet in some positive way through the work that they do.

However, doing something or creating something of value is not necessarily driven by images of the long-term future, such as thoughts about one's personal legacy. More often than not, workers---in all industries and sectors---also find meaning in making a difference in the "here and now." For example, I frequently hear people describe the meaning that is derived from their work in words like: "I love the job I have because every day I can look back on at least one thing that helped someone or something."

Experiential Values

Experiencing something of value or encountering someone (in a value-added way) clearly is another source of meaning in everyday life and at work. Besides the experience of making a genuine difference through their work, most people can describe many different kinds of human encounters and other work-related experiences that clearly provide them with abundant sources of meaning. All of these experiences, in one way or another, illustrate that human beings are interdependent and that the search for meaning at work includes, as was mentioned earlier, some sense of the "spiritual", or put differently, the transcendent. Indeed, Dr. Frankl's Logotherapy can be viewed as much more than "meaning therapy" for it not only helped to humanize psychotherapy but has served to spiritualize it as well.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the process of authentic dialogue undergirds the practice of Logotherapy and that the concept of the "logos", which is one of the roots of the word, dialogue, is so fundamental to Dr. Frankl's existential philosophy and therapeutic system. The common Greek word, logos, most frequently but only roughly translated as "the meaning", also has deep spiritual roots. In this regard, one of the first references to logos as "spirit" came from the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, around 500 B.C. Moreover, the "logos", as referred to here, is the very essence of Logotherapy---both in terms of its meaning-centered and spiritual connotations. Dr. Frankl, it should be underscored, uniquely stood out among (and above) his contemporaries in interpreting the "logos" in this way.

Attitudinal Values

According to Dr. Frankl, whenever one is confronted with inescapable, unavoidable situations that are associated with suffering, the opportunity to actualize attitudinal values--namely, those that involve one's attitude toward the suffering---becomes a source of deep meaning. To be sure, this is much easier said than done and not everyone, of course, is prepared to confront such situations from this kind of meaning-centered perspective.

Still, along the continuum of possibilities for finding meaning in situations that involve suffering, from surviving a concentration camp as did Dr. Frankl or confronting an incurable disease, on the one side, to dealing with a job loss or similar situation on the other, the attitude that one chooses toward the given situation will largely influence both the response to and outcome from it. The freedom to choose one's attitude in any situation certainly has plenty of opportunity to play itself out within the operating domain of work. Among other things, more reflection by all of us on how to actualize attitudinal values and thereby advance the search for meaning at work is necessary.

Implications

So what does all of this mean or suggest for the future? The search for meaning at work is a process---a journey---not a product. In this regard, the future of work in the 21st Century and beyond will depend largely upon how well we prepare for this journey. And preparation for this journey will require all of us to respond authentically to the kinds of meaning-

centered questions and issues that have been introduced in this article.

The glass can be perceived either as half empty or half full. We all have the opportunity to choose how we view any situation. We also can choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution. In this regard, the search for meaning at work begins with us and, as Dr. Frankl would say, only we, as individuals, can answer for our own life by detecting the meaning at any given moment and assuming the [responsibility](#) for weaving our own tapestry of existence. The search for meaning at work, like any other situational context, offers all of us both formidable challenges and ample opportunities for living an authentic life. The journey awaits us!

Thread 4: SEARCH FOR MEANING IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sat Oct 08, 2005 12:31 pm Post subject: SEARCH FOR MEANING IN PUBLIC SERVICE

SEARCH FOR MEANING IN PUBLIC SERVICE

In April 2004, an excerpt of an article that I had written was published in **Fieldnotes: A Newsletter of the Shambhala Institute**---- [Search for Meaning in Public Service](#). The article was originally published in the Public Administration Review, the leading international journal for government officials (January/February 2004), entitled "The Search for Meaning in Government Service."

In watching the many happenings in our country and in the world that continue to put a spotlight *public service*, the message of this article is even more important today than when I originally wrote it Below is a brief excerpt and link to the complete article.

YOUR STORIES AND OBSERVATIONS

Hope you write me back and share your thoughts on the search for meaning in public service. I would love to hear your personal stories and observations:

Actualizing meaningful, experiential values in government service is much more common than many outside observers, especially political pundits and bureaucratic critics, may want to admit. Besides the experience of making a genuine difference through their work, public servants describe many different kinds of human encounters and other work-related experiences that clearly provide them with abundant sources of authentic meaning. All of these experiences, in one way or another, illustrate that human beings are interdependent and that the search for meaning in government service includes some sense of the transcendent. Significantly, in interviews with more than 200 reflective public servants, mostly from the United States and Canada, the public service paths of government servants

were found to be largely influenced by encounters with two key actors: parents and mentors. In both cases, the influence was viewed as a determining factor not only in the decision to enter public service in the first place but also in navigating the choices along one's career path. Parents, in this regard, were most often cited as the basis for a sound public service "ethic" (attitudes, values, and commitment to help others through government service), whereas mentors were more likely to serve as role models for appropriate behaviors as public servants in the trenches. Frequently, both parents and mentors served as catalysts for finding meaning in public service and provided important strategic guideposts, through their example, during the quest. Indeed, their central influence in this way should not be taken lightly and, in fact, should point the way towards how best to leverage the 3Rs—retirement, recruitment, and retention—for the public sector's (and general public's) benefit. Public perceptions of government and public servants also frame the way that experiential values are actualized in order to detect meaning at work. Here's how one city manager described the challenge of his job: I guess I just believe with a zeal that one of my most important roles (as a public servant) is to do missionary work at every opportunity. I get to convince people that not all government officials deserve their criticism.

...The search for meaning in government service is a process—a journey—not a product. If nation-states around the world really expect to manage the public's business effectively, efficiently, and equitably, then something is going to have to change about the way that government service is perceived and treated. In this regard, the future of government service in the 21st Century and beyond will depend upon how well we prepare for the journey that is before us. And preparation for this journey will require all of us to respond authentically to the kinds of meaning-centered questions and issues that have been introduced in this article. In short, the spirit of public administration demands public servants who are driven by the search for meaning and who seek a noble calling through government service. It is the role of all of us to support them (and each other) in the quest.

[Read article at Shambhala Institute](#)

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Thread 5: When is Enough Enough?!

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue Aug 16, 2005 12:04 pm Post subject: When is Enough Enough?!

When is enough enough? For Stephen Crawford and his allies at Morgan Stanley, it seems like there are no limits to corporate greed. Grab as much as you can, whether you've earned it or not! Once again, we find America's corporate leaders acting like kids raiding a candy store. How did we let things get so out of whack? Are the celebrated prosecutions of the former icons at Worldcom, Tyco, Enron, and the like, just a smokescreen--a way to cover up what is really going on in corporate America?

This is a time when corporate responsibility and accountability are being called into serious question. So, how did we lose so much perspective on the way that business ought to be conducted? And why do we even tolerate such blatant abuse from these "leaders?" What is the role of corporate leadership and governance any way? And do these leaders really care about the message they are conveying to their community of stakeholders?

Mr. Crawford's \$32 million "severance package," after only three months on the job as a *co-president* not even president, is disgusting. Think about it: that's \$500,000 a day! Is he really that more "talented" and deserving than an administrative assistant who gets only \$100 a day? How, we should ask, do others at Morgan Stanley put this situation into perspective? Is it even possible? Besides any public outcry about the firm's pay contracts, how do employees grapple with the deeper issues of management integrity and ethics, as well as the inner workings of their own moral compass? Indeed, it must be extremely difficult to remain loyal, let alone personally motivated, in the face of such offensive and disrespectful behaviors.

Where and when, we should also ask, will it all end? Do we just keep upping the ante and let unbridled greed become generally accepted as "business as usual?" Do we even have a choice in the matter? I certainly hope so. Indeed, if there ever was a time to question what is going on in American business and ask why we have lost so much perspective, it is **now**. So let's do something about it, **now**.

Let's begin by recognizing and building upon the wisdom of Viktor Frankl, who affirmed that the human quest for meaning is the primary motivation in life--in my life, in your life, and in everyone's life. Put differently, our commitment to meaningful values and goals is essential to living an authentic life. And this includes our work life. In other words, all of us, and especially those of us in leadership positions, need to seriously ponder such questions as: What is the meaning of my work? Why do I do what I do? How am I making this a better workplace and world for all? What is my life's legacy? What are the core values that make me who I am and guide what I do?

Importantly, as Dr. Frankl would say, the relentless pursuit of power, money, and pleasure are often signs that something is missing in our life. In effect, our apparent need or drive for these "outside" things is really just an attempt to cover up, but not necessarily fill, a void of authentic meaning "inside" our lives. In other words, because our *will to meaning* (recall Principle #2 in this 24/7 Conversation) has been frustrated, for whatever reasons, we choose alternative paths to follow--paths based on the premise that power, money, and/or pleasure will somehow be able to replace what has been missing. Not so.

Research and experience have shown that only the search for meaning holds the potential to bring the kind of authentic enrichment and fulfillment that most people desire from their work and in their everyday lives. Yet, because power, money, and pleasure, not meaning, have been used for designing and managing both organizations and work, we continue to observe the kinds of corporate abuse that occurred most recently at Morgan Stanley.

Let's stop it now. Enough is enough! It's now time for corporate America to strike a balance between the motivational forces that drive business. It's now time to pull back on the reins of corporate greed in order to regain the integrity and rediscover the soul of business. In short, it's now time for you and me, and everyone in corporate America, to realize the "will to meaning!"

Author

bill.tipton116

Joined: 03 Nov 2004

Posts: 61

Location: San Jose

Message

Posted: Wed Aug 24, 2005 5:04 pm Post subject: Re: When is Enough Enough?!

Hi Alex,

Thanks for your message. I totally agree.

I do not think these leaders really care about the message they are conveying to their community of stakeholders. Otherwise they would not lay off thousands of employees, move jobs off shore, and cut benefits trying to save a little money, when so much money is tied up in high salaries for the few! All of this happens while the normal workers struggle to live, working many jobs, working 60-80 hours a week possibly causing medical problems, and still cannot afford to buy a house to live in or have hopes of retirement.

I cannot see things getting better unless someone at a high leadership position can show the other leaders things can be done ethically without over due stress on the worlds resources and still make enough money for the employees and stakeholders to live comfortably. I will try to make a difference where I can.

With all of these negative distractions going on I try to hold my course on what I am striving for.

What motivates me is when I can help others to get better at what they do. This is very gratifying when someone feels like they have no hope and might be stuck and I am able to show kindness and help them out of a situation they thought might be hopeless. After helping one person the word spreads and I am able to help others, as those people help others because of the positive impact of caring. Eventually I am helping people all over the world and we are having fun communicating the best we can with our language differences. I imagine it like tentacles spreading out like roots of a Redwood tree reaching more and more people who are concern for others and just not themselves.

I'll give just one example of what I mean.

I am working with an employee in Germany who cannot do part of his or her job because an application will not work with their screen reading software. Screen reading software is software used by the blind or visually impaired to allow this population to use a PC without sight. At the time of contact with the employee they might feel very isolated thinking they are one of a very few employees who use screen reading software to do their daily work. You might picture this employee sitting at their desk hearing the voices of others around them, but not being able to see anyone because of their sight impairment, adding to any anxieties they might have trying to do their job with inadequate tools. They also might feel

their job is in jeopardy because they cannot perform part of their job effectively. After working with the developers and the employee we may find some simple ways to modify the application or the screen reader to get it to work with the application effectively. After the employee is able to do their job efficiently you have usually won a friend for life. The manager of that employee is very happy to see their employee succeed. The developer is pleased as well, because now they know a little about how to make accessible applications that will be usable by more people. Everyone is delighted. This is just one example of what drives me daily, positive change for as many people as I can touch.

Not sure how I can help with the bigger problem of corporate greed, wish I knew, or was in a high level leadership position to make a bigger difference. As I pursue my career I am working on that and maybe some day I will get to that level to make the big changes needed.

Have a great day and thanks for bringing this topic up.

Bill

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Thu Sep 01, 2005 6:40 am Post subject: You are making a positive difference!

Hi Bill,

Thank you so much for your thoughtful and insightful post. In addition to "agreeing" with my perspective on corporate greed, you underscore the importance of taking personal **responsibility** for influencing change, no matter at what level it may occur. Bravo! Indeed, your experience with helping the German employee is very instructive and meaning-full. I hope that everyone who ventures into this dialogue will learn from your example.

Insofar as making a difference on the "bigger" problem of corporate greed, let's not ignore the powerful influence of doing the things that you are doing. If we all followed your example, as well as sought to link our efforts and learnings through this kind of dialogue, I have no doubt that we'll be able to turn the bigger ship around! So keep it up, my friend!

All the best,
Alex

Thread 6: Far-Reaching Possibilities – Prisoners of Our Thoughts

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sat Aug 06, 2005 6:28 pm Post subject: Far-Reaching Possibilities – Prisoners of Our Thoughts

Far-Reaching Possibilities – Applying Prisoners of Our Thoughts Principles to our lives, our communities and the world

Hello to each of you,

It continues to be a meaningful experience to share Viktor Frankl's principles with the thousands of people all over the world showing up in some way for the *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* dialogue here at the Global Dialogue Center. To keep the conversation going, I thought I would also share messages each month to highlight what I am learning from and through others.

Below is a letter I recently received from Lydia Morris Browne of *Business Book Review*, who wrote a [book review](#) of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* previously. Her perspective, which was triggered by a recent article describing how *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is being used in Indonesia to lessen the suffering due to the Asian Tsunami, demonstrates some of the far-reaching possibilities for applying *Prisoners of Our Thoughts'* message and Viktor Frankl's principles to our lives, our communities, and the world we all share.

Hope this also will inspire you. I would love to hear how you are using what you've learned and promise to write back to you!
See Lydia's letter below.

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
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LETTER FROM LYDIA MORRIS BROWN:

Dear Alex,

It must be very gratifying to see your work create so much value in such unexpected places, which I sincerely believe was Dr. Frankl's intention when he handed you this important baton ***Training for a Meaning**** stands as incontrovertible affirmation that you are, indeed, fulfilling your mission as disciple and working hard to draw attention to the ideals and philosophy of your mentor. Your work is extending and expanding a path to enlightenment that your mentor, Dr. Frankl, graciously opened.

Unfortunately, the entire world is a mess. And, seemingly every corner of it is either reeling

from unheard of disasters of nature or from some atrocity created from the deluded minds of us human beings. Thus, I envision the possibility of Prisoners of Our Thoughts being used everywhere as the de rigeure training tool in the killing fields of the Middle East, the plague-ridden bush and veld of Africa, and the cities and country sides worldwide ravaged by either terrorist attack or the vicissitudes of Mother Nature.

I encourage you to try to get Prisoners of Our Thoughts into the hands of every agency/institution/organization (e.g., the Red Cross, the military, FEMA, the Salvation Army, police and fire departments, etc.) that has set dealing with the human condition as its task. Given what's going on in the world, those involved on the front lines must have access to your thoughtful and powerful guide, which I believe will help them develop the wisdom, energy, clarity, and strength to continue their invaluable contributions. In his infinite wisdom, this is perhaps what Dr. Frankl intended when he said, "Alex, yours is the book that needs to be written!"

Sincerely,
Lydia

***NOTE:** The *Training for Meaning* article referenced can be purchased as a downloadable PDF on [ASTD's website](#)

Thread 7: 7th Principle – Extend Beyond Yourself

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Fri Jul 01, 2005 12:12 pm Post subject: 7th Principle - Extend Beyond Yourself

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D. --- 7th Principle ----EXTEND BEYOND YOURSELF

I can't believe we've already reached the 7th of Viktor Frankl's Principles! This principle asks us to reach beyond all we've learned ---to reach beyond ourselves. It not only calls you to look even more closely at yourself, but leaves you with a compelling call-to-action. This 7th conversation in the **PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS Dialogue Series**. centers around the **Viktor Frankl Principle --- EXTEND BEYOND YOURSELF**. Frankl highlighted this self-transcendent principle in a poignant passage in his book, [Man's Search for Meaning](#):

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"Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued, it must ensue and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen by not caring about it."

--- Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

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THREE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

👉 BE A PART OF OUR CONTINUING CONVERSATION:

All the conversations we've been having over the months are *timeless* and can be helpful anytime you need a reminder or just a little inspiration and boost to your courage to transcend whatever is standing in your way.

If you missed the earlier conversations, they are still posted. You may find it helpful to review them and I welcome your thoughts on ANY topic. I think you'll benefit from the review as we move into **Extend Beyond Yourself**. The six Viktor Frankl principles we have explored so far are:

- Principle 1: Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude
- Principle 2: Realize your will to meaning
- Principle 3: Detect the meaning of life's moments
- Principle 4: Don't work against yourself
- Principle 5: Look at yourself from a distance
- Principle 6: Shift your focus of attention

👉 Cast your vote in the **The Meaning in Work and Life Survey** --- [Click here to learn more](#)

👉 Visit the Viktor Frankl commemorative exhibit at the Global Dialogue Center's **KNOWLEDGE GALLERY**. It's one you won't want to miss! It serves as a backdrop for our conversation.

PRINCIPLE 7: Extend Beyond Yourself

--- Manifest the human spirit at work by relating and being directed to something more than yourself.

In my book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, I tell an inspiring story about Andrea Jaeger, the youngest seeded player in Wimbledon history in 1980. At only 15 years old, she was also the youngest US Open semi-finalist that same year. Andrea was positioned for continued athletic success and fame. Yet, by 1984, her career in tennis had come to an end because of injuries and burnout. Andrea disappeared from the sports radar screen and the public eye. However, during her years of being a tennis phenomenon, Andrea had spent her time off with sick children in hospitals around the world. This became the catalyst for a metamorphosis in her life. In 1989, she made a decision to dedicate her life to terminally ill children, giving them a greater opportunity to experience life. In no small way, Andrea's response shows that the heart's light within the human spirit is most brightly illuminated when we create meaning beyond our own lives. From this dedication, she built the Kids Stuff Foundation. She was asked by NBC Dateline some years later, "How do you want to be remembered?" Without having to think, she said, "I don't need to be remembered. I want the kids to be remembered."

When we work creatively and productively with others, our experience of meaning can be profound. When we work directly for the good of others, meaning deepens in ways that reward us beyond measure. Whenever we go beyond satisfying our own personal needs, we enter the realm of what Frankl called "ultimate meaning." Some call it connection to a higher self, to God, to our own spirit, to universal consciousness, to love, to the collective good. No matter what it's called, it is deep meaning and it transforms our lives.

The capacity to extend beyond yourself, according to Frankl, is another one of our unique traits as human beings. If we take just a few minutes to look around in our lives, every day we will see people doing things for others, quietly, unexpectedly, and without compensation. If we were to ask why, they might not have ready answers. But I suspect that they would all agree, "It feels good." Selflessness---extending beyond ourselves----feels good. It satisfies something in us that yearns to go beyond or transcend ourselves, that knows we are honoring a deeper meaning in life when we serve the needs of others. The capacity to extend beyond yourself, according to Frankl, is another one of our unique traits as human beings.

The yearning to be of deep service often comes out of deep suffering. Viktor Frankl, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Aung Sang Suu Chi---all transformed their suffering into service. They experienced their suffering as meaningful in the most profound ways. It wasn't bitterness that resulted from their suffering; it was love ---- and meaning. The sacredness of being able to extend beyond their suffering informed and transformed the rest of their lives. Meaning became their life's work.

We aren't all called to be Mandela or a Gandhi, but if we pay attention, we will find that life calls to us every day to go beyond our own interests ----extending beyond ourselves. The search for meaning in our lives takes us on paths large and small. When we go beyond ourselves----whether in forgiveness, unselfishness, thoughtfulness, generosity and understanding toward others---we enter into the spiritual realm of meaning. By giving beyond ourselves we make our own lives richer.

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION...

Individual Reflection Activities

For our conversation this month, consider these questions. Then *TALK* with us. Help everyone learn by sharing from your memories, experiences or current issues...

Recall a situation in your work or personal life in which you felt the need to **extend beyond yourself** in order to deal with it effectively. Consider situations like:

---- you were faced with a critical business or personal situation requiring an extraordinary response.

---- you were faced with a question of corporate social responsibility that required some soul-searching for an answer

How did you extend beyond yourself to deal with the situation?

What, if anything, happened with this change in consciousness??

What did you learn from the experience of extending beyond yourself?

What did you learn about yourself in the process?

News Flash --- TALKING WITH YOU IN PERSON --- You're Invited!

Keep an eye out...I will be talking with Debbe Kennedy, Founder of the Global Dialogue Center how Prisoners of Our Thoughts is being used in dealing with a wide variety of personal situations, including personal transformation. Additionally, how it has been used as a platform for engaging stakeholders in "meaningful" dialogue at a public policy/political level. It will be posted in August in the [Global Dialogue Center's Virtual Events](#). I also invite you to listen to my NPR interview currently available.

I look forward to hearing from you and you'll hear back from me!

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
founder, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Thread 8: Viktor Frankl: Meaning of Life

Author

Spencer St John

Joined: 17 May 2005
Posts: 3
Location: Tampa Florida

Message

Posted: Sat May 21, 2005 7:45 pm Post subject: Viktor Frankl: Meaning of Life

Dear Mr Pittakos,

I am just now begining to study the works of Viktor Frankl. I attend the University of Phoenix and I would like very much to continue my studies in his works.

I am new to your website and I hope it is all right that I began a new topic. There is a question I would like to ask you, if I may.

One of the questions I have been asked for one of my assignments is

" How do you think Victor Frankl would answer the question, "What does it mean to be human?"

I am becoming familiar with his views and life experiences, but I would like to hear what your answer to this question would be. Noone would know him better than you, Sir.

Thank you,
Spencer

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Mon May 23, 2005 7:44 am Post subject: Being a Human Being

Dear Spencer,

Thanks for joining the conversation! Starting a new topic is fine with me; all I ask is that you take a look at what has been posted thus far and, ideally, read *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*. And, since those who attend (and teach for) the University of Phoenix are pretty savvy with e-learning and virtual communities, I'd love for you to spread an "idea virus" among your fellow students and encourage them to visit the Global Dialogue Center too!

Naturally, I'm pleased that you have been studying the works of Viktor Frankl. Insofar as your question is concerned, I think that Dr. Frankl would be extremely pleased that you asked it! You asked, "What does it **mean** to be human?" [Emphasis added] Interestingly, without knowing it, you embedded the "answer" that you are seeking in the very wording of the question itself! Let me explain.

The second principle introduced in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* is "Realize Your Will to Meaning." Like the other principles, the Will to Meaning is a manifestation of our unique "human-ness." In this regard, to Dr. Frankl, humans are beings "whose main concern consists of fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts" like other living, non-human entities.

And furthermore, Frankl would say that, as people become more aware of their Will to Meaning, they will be more likely to ask existential questions--like you are doing--about their work/life and consider the kind of personal "legacy" that they would like to leave behind. As I point out in Chapter 6 of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* ("Detecting the Meaning of Life's Moments"), to Frankl, "this kind of questioning is a manifestation of being truly human: 'No ant, no bee, no animal will ever raise the question of whether or not its existence has a meaning, but man does. It's his privilege that he cares for a meaning to his existence. He is not only searching for such a meaning, but he is even entitled to it....'"

Importantly, Dr. Frankl also believed that our "sense of humor," which is closely related to the principle of Self-Detachment (see: posting on this site and Chapter 8, "Look at Yourself from a Distance"), and the capacity to "Extend Beyond Yourself" (Principle 7, Chapter 10) are unique traits and help to distinguish our human-ness.

I hope that this brief response is useful to you. By the way, you may be interested to know that I will be conducting a session on *Prisoner of Our Thoughts* in your neck of the woods in a couple of weeks. On Sunday, June 5, I'll be speaking at the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) International Conference and Exposition in Orlando, Florida.

Thanks again for your participation and good luck with your assignment!

All the best,
Alex

Author

Spencer St John

Joined: 17 May 2005
Posts: 3
Location: Tampa Florida

Message

Posted: Tue Jun 07, 2005 6:18 pm Post subject:

Dear Mr. Pattakos,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me in regards to Viktor Frankl. Please know that what you teach me will not be used to make my assignments any easier but, instead, to learn more about life and how to apply what I learn to my future in business. I regret not being able to come to see you when you were in Florida. I have epilepsy and cannot drive a car. I would have loved to be there. Perhaps, some day, you will come to Tampa.

At this time, I'm studying artificial intelligence in the computer field and it made me wonder what your personal opinion would be in this subject. Do you think that computers will ever have the abilities of a human? Or do you think that only people could have the capability to have the will to meaning in their life? I know it is an odd question to ask, but going to school makes me question so many things, and I know you apply Dr. Frankl's teachings into the business world. I enjoy hearing your thoughts and I learn a lot from your answers. All of the posts at this site are wonderful to read. When I find myself losing my temper or becoming irritable, I always remember: "Only you have the ability to change your attitude."....It works.

Thank you..
Spencer

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sat Jun 11, 2005 9:00 am Post subject: The "Soul" of a Machine

Dear Spencer,

Your asked: "Do you think that computers will ever have the abilities of a human? Or do you think that only people could have the capability to have the will to meaning in their life?"

First, let me say that I don't consider this to be an "odd" question at all. In fact, in the contemporary, postmodern era--a time when our fascination with technology borders on obsession--it is extremely important that we ask such existential questions.

I must admit that I am a technology buff and well recognize that, especially due to advances in IT , computing, and telecommunications, I would not be able to "do" what I am doing without such technological advances. At the same time, I recognize that my "being" is not technologically determined, nor should it be.

Having worked in the computer domain for a very long time (the World Future Society, for example, has credited me as the inventor of the "Electronic Visiting Professor" concept, an innovation in on-line learning when the Information Highway was still a dirt road!), I'm also sensitive to the need to ensure that human beings "control" the technology rather than the other way around. To be sure, advances in computer science (including AI and robotics), when coupled with the evolving/emerging disciplines of neuroscience, cognitive science, neural networks, and complexity science, offer great promise and an exciting future of possibilities.

This said, I submit that the "will to meaning" is a distinctly human characteristic or attribute, one that is embedded in and achieves its "life" from the human spirit or soul (I'll use these terms interchangeably here). This intrinsic capability of all humans, in my opinion, is a manifestation of our true human-ness and distinguishes us from "machines," no matter how sophisticated in terms of capabilities they may be. Hence, while I'm intrigued by technology and embrace its capabilities for building a better life and world for all human beings, I'm more intrigued by human beings "as is" and "as all that they can become." Inherent in this view, of course, is a strong belief in "meta" physics, broadly-defined, and the spirituality of all living entities, including human beings.

Speaking of human beings, let me close by saying that my recent experience at the ASTD International Conference & Exposition in Orlando, Florida, was truly EXTRA-ordinary and MEANING-full! My session was packed with 400 attendees who were fully engaged--further testimony to the importance of the message in Prisoners of Our Thoughts. I also conducted a very successful book signing. Indeed, my book sold out so quickly that ASTD had to re-order it!

Thanks again for your interest and participation. Keep up the good work!

All the best,
Alex

Thread 9: 6th Principle – Shift Your Focus of Attention

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue May 31, 2005 8:04 pm Post subject: 6th Principle - Shift Your Focus of Attention

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D. **6th Principle ----Shift Your Focus of Attention**

Hello to everyone! We're starting the 6th conversation in the **PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS Dialogue Series**. This month centers around the **Viktor Frankl Principle --- Shift Your Focus of Attention**.

I'm glad to see **YOU** if you've been following along and welcome you if this is your first time participating.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU:

I'm very appreciative to those of you who have shared your thoughts and stories. It helps all of us to learn from what others experience. I also want to acknowledge those of you stopping by. There have been close to 2500 people who have shown up in some way for this conversation and a number have provided their feedback in other ways. Of course, I wish more of you would brave the posting experience. I would love to talk WITH you. However, whatever way you choose to participate demonstrates again the interest we all have in finding **MEANING in our lives**.

THREE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

👉 Cast your vote in the **The Meaning in Work and Life Survey** --- [Click here to learn more](#)

👉 Visit Viktor Frankl commemorative exhibit at the Global Dialogue Center's [KNOWLEDGE GALLERY](#). It's one you won't want to miss! It serves as a backdrop for our conversation.

👉 **JOIN OUR CONTINUING CONVERSATION:**

If you missed the first five discussions, they are still posted. You may find it helpful to review them and I welcome your thoughts on any topic. I think you'll benefit from the review as we move into **Shift Your Focus of Attention** So far in this dialogue series, we have explored **five** of Viktor Frankl's principles:

---- Principle 1: Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude

---- Principle 2: Realize your will to meaning

---- Principle 3: Detect the meaning of life's moments

---- Principle 4: Don't work against yourself

---- Principle 5: Look at yourself from a distance

PRINCIPLE 6: 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.

This principle is particularly useful when you are faced with a difficult situation or decision to make. In the my book, I highlight a story of a man named Andy---a former executive with a major software company. He used to make more than \$130,000 a year with great benefits. Suddenly, he found himself laid-off and unable to find a job that offered the same or similar

responsibilities, status, salary and benefits. Instead, out of desperation, he found himself grasping at survival jobs offering considerably less.

Most important, Andy's approach to dealing with this loss is an example for us all. Instead of allowing his life to be driven by frustration, money worries, shame or embarrassment, he managed to see himself as going forward instead of seeing this unexpected change as going backward. An avid golfer, he looked for jobs related to his hobby and landed a job at the pro shop, moving on later to selling golf equipment at a bigger store.

Andy learned a great deal since he was cut from his executive job in late 2001. Among other things, he's been able to see the silver lining in what could have been, for him as it is for so many of his peers, a cloud of despair and a time of inner emptiness. Instead, he serves as a great role model for us in the way he was able to **shift his focus** to more important matters in his life and has discovered deeper, personal meaning in the process.

How about you??? How resilient are you??? Think of a time when you've been able to deflect the reality in your life and see a more positive side to it all.

The same skills that helped Andy can help us on the job or in our personal lives to deal with difficult people, situations or decisions. We all know complainers. At one time or another, we've all been one. When we get locked into our own complaining shadow and focus on all the bad stuff, we immediately lose sight of the good stuff. When we can learn to de-reflect--that is, shift our focus of attention--- from what is bothering us to a more positive target, we get a different insight into solving the problem before us.

The principle of de-reflection, Frankl would say, helps us to ignore those aspects of our life and work that should be ignored. It also helps to turn us away from being self-absorbed with our problems and directs us toward the true meanings that beg to be discovered by us. In effect, de-reflection encourages us to perceive something new in a situation so that we may let go of our old perceptions and ways of doing.

~~~~~  
De-reflection can only be attained to the degree to which...awareness is directed toward positive aspects."  
--- Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*  
~~~~~

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION... Individual Reflection Activities
For our conversation this month, consider these questions. Then TALK with us.
Help everyone learn by sharing from your memories, experiences or current issues...

Recall a situation in your work or personal life from which you felt the need to **shift your attention** in order to deal with it effectively. Consider situations like:
---- you were faced with a critical business or family decision
---- you were thrust into an emergency situation requiring swift action
---- you found yourself in the middle of a personal crisis

How did you shift your focus from the situation to something else?

What if anything did you do as a result of your shift of focus?

What did you imagine or fanaticize?

What did you learn about your capacity for shifting the focus of your attention?

Looking back, what did you learn in the process?

I look forward to hearing from you and you'll hear back from me!! All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
founder and managing director, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Thread 10: 1st Principle - ...Your Freedom to Choose Your Attitude

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sun Jan 02, 2005 2:32 pm Post subject: 1st Principle - ...Your Freedom to Choose Your Attitude

1st Principle ---- Exercise the Freedom to Choose Your Attitude

Welcome to the *PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS* conversation series.


I'm glad to "see" you and look forward to getting to know each of you over time.

Let me start by having you think about a couple of questions:

Why do some people seem to have an easier time dealing with complex and challenging situations than others?

Why do some people seem more capable of dealing with change than others?

In recent weeks and months, we have all had the opportunity to witness these differences, seeing the power of the human spirit in the worst of situations. It is timely that we start this series by exploring the first of Viktor Frankl's core principles:

 **PRINCIPLE 1: 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.

"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." ---Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION...

I'd like know what you've experienced ... and observed in your work and everyday life. Recall a situation in which you consciously exercised the freedom to choose your attitude about it. This could even be your current situation or one where you were confronted by a co-worker or difficult boss or unexpected change in the past. What was your initial attitude? How did it change? Did you actually "do" anything to change your attitude? If you have a difficult time focusing on yourself at first, think about your observation and inspirations of others that might help us all apply this principle in our own lives.

I'll be checking in from time to time. Look forward to learning from your thoughts and experiences.

All the best,

Alex

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Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Author

Robby
Guest

Message

Posted: Wed Jan 12, 2005 4:10 pm Post subject: Freedom to Choose Attitude

Alex

I've not yet had a chance to read the book but it sure does sound interesting. Attitude to me is a changing phenomenum. It is something that can change as a result of environment, emotion or any other internal or external force. Therefore an attitude towards something one day may be different on another. I have to agree that we do have this freedom yet at times I can reflect on why my attitude about something may be different and regret it!

Thanks for starting an interesting conversation.

Robby

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Fri Jan 14, 2005 6:20 am Post subject: Ultimately, YOU still have the FREEDOM

Dear Robby,

First, let me thank you for being the first person to openly join this conversation! And, of course, I do hope that you read my book, which will help to clarify this principle and provide guidance as to how it "works."

I agree with you that attitudes can and do change. Thank goodness! Just imagine if they could not. One of my clients recently questioned me about this principle (he had not yet read my book), saying "why was there a need for him to choose his attitude, he *already* had one!" Obviously, we have some work to do, so that he understands and can use this principle in a constructive way.

Have you ever encountered someone who always seems to have a "Bad" attitude? Or, what about people who always seem to see things in a positive light?

My point is that all of us have more "control" over our attitude than we think. Importantly, when we "choose" to think otherwise (and, therefore, allow ourselves to become "prisoners of our thoughts"), effectively we ignore--and thereby relinquish--an inner source of our unique humanness. Indeed, the fact that we can "detach" ourselves from ourselves and "self-reflect" is a unique trait of human beings. So, when you reflect on your attitude about something (and even have feelings of regret), remember that it is YOUR attitude, no one else's.

Of course, it is important to stay **aware** of this principle, which, as you imply, is not always easy. *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* was written to help readers understand, practice, and live the core principles that I derived from Viktor Frankl's wisdom. And, trust me, this does take a lot of practice!

As Stephen Covey wrote in his introduction/Foreword to my book,

*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.*

By first acknowledging that, ultimately, we all have the freedom to choose our attitude to any situation that confronts us, we are on our way to ensuring that we do not become "prisoners of our thoughts!"

Thanks again for sharing with us and please do not go away. In fact, I invite everyone to join the dialogue!

Author

bill.tipton116

Joined: 03 Nov 2004

Posts: 61

Location: San Jose

Message

Posted: Tue Jan 18, 2005 8:21 pm Post subject: Re: Ultimately, YOU still have the FREEDOM

Hi Alex, Robby and others,

I enjoy your topic. I have not yet read your book Prisoners of Our Thoughts but hope to some day because it sounds great! I cannot read standard print books too easily because I am blind. Maybe some day your book will be in a library on audio tape or be in another media format where I can more easily access it. I have listened to Mans Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl on audio tape. I listened to that book shortly after I went blind suddenly. My counselor at the time recommended it to me and I really enjoyed it.

I completely agree attitude plays a very large part in how you are perceived, accomplish work, get along with others and do things that you would never think you could do.

When I first went blind a few years ago I thought I would be completely useless and thought I had no hope. I lay in a hospital bed for 7 months while they did surgeries, did tests, and gave me drugs to try to help me to get better. I laid there like a limp rag, not eating, not watching television, or listening to it in my case, and lost one-third of my body weight before I eventually went home. When I was finally able to go home I had to make some fast decisions. I never had any doubt that I would return to work and be productive. I am not sure where those thoughts came from. I just never had any doubt, and when some people would act sort of shocked when I told them my plans, I was sort of shocked myself wondering, didn't everyone want to strive for something. I know I must have had a funny grin on my face as I tried to perceive their response and reactions to my plans for my future. For example some told me I could not do what I had just told them and some I think were biting their tongue to stay quiet and not say anything. I was told I would never walk again and I am now walking with the help of two canes. I was told just to stay out on disability and I am now working.

Alex, I will try to answer your questions below.

Why do some people seem to have an easier time dealing with complex and challenging situations than others?

In my case the alternative was complete boredom, sitting around the house listening to books on tape and getting physically worse. I used to be really active and wanted to continue to do those things even if I could not see any more. I still want to have fun!

Why do some people seem more capable of dealing with change than others?

I think some people fall into habits of what they do with their time. After years of doing one or two things that may fill up that persons time completely and they might think they have no time to do anything else or change anything else and just stay in that situation. It is far easier to say I cannot change. But the funny thing is when you do squeeze in that one extra thing it does fit into your schedule and you advance in what area you are pursuing. You may even find time to squeeze in one more thing and so on. The ball is rolling now and you are changing.

Thanks so much for your topic.

Bill Tipton

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Wed Jan 19, 2005 7:32 pm Post subject: You are an inspiration!

Dear Bill,

Thank you so much for joining in the conversation. And, importantly, thank you for sharing such a heart-felt, inspirational, and meaning-full account of your personal experiences. Indeed, not only is it significant that you listened to Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, at such a critical time in your life, but also you put Frankl's principles to "work" in a very profound way. By example, you have demonstrated how important it is to exercise the freedom to choose your attitude in *all* situations. Thank you!

Blessings,
Alex

Author

KYMs

Joined: 09 Nov 2004
Posts: 7
Location: Portland

Message

Posted: Tue Jan 25, 2005 2:02 pm Post subject: Creatures of Habit

Dear Kym,

First, let me thank YOU for joining the conversation and sharing your thoughts and feelings with the rest of us.

Now, of course, I highly recommend that you read *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* as soon as possible! 😊

Seriously, you are not alone in wondering how you can change your attitude--which is not only the central focus of this particular Principle but also is the essence of the notion that we often hold ourselves "Prisoners of Our Thoughts."

The fact that you are asking what to do "when you *want* to change your attitude" is a great start. I have found that many people are not even aware of their attitude toward something, let alone willing to change it. In one case, I had a person tell me, "I already have an attitude, so why should I change it?!" (It didn't matter that this person's attitude could be described as a "BAD" attitude in the first place!)

Now, to get back to your specific question, in Chapter 4 of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, there is an exercise called the "Ten Positive Things" that can help you address difficult situations, as well as help you "exercise the freedom to choose your attitude." In effect, this simple exercise forces you to perceive the "positive" attributes or implications that may be associated with or result from a negative situation. It also opens up the possibilities to see your situation from a different, albeit positive, vantage point. In this way, and not to minimize the significance of the situation at hand, you help yourself by "unfreezing" your mind and ensuring that you are not stuck in the yuk of the situation. You increase the chances that you will find a positive solution to the situation and, at the very least, help to avoid or decrease the likelihood that other negative consequences will occur. In short, you

hold the "keys" to your own inner prison cell, even though some times they seem well out of reach.

Remember, habits are learned attitudes and behaviors; so while change is much easier said than done, there is still hope in "unlearning" the so-called bad habits and learning or re-learning good, "healthy" ones.

I hope that this is helpful. Please let me know if it is not. Thanks again for sharing!

All the best,
Alex

Author

stateofmind_77

Joined: 30 Jan 2005
Posts: 20
Location: California

Message

Posted: Sun Jan 30, 2005 4:23 pm Post subject:

I have not read the book yet either, but this topic hits close to home for me. The ability to change and adapt, and fully realize our own potentials is something that has been on my mind a lot. You asked if we had had an experience where we chose our attitude. I have one, but it is quite strange, and this subject might be hard for some to swallow. I experienced a psychotic depression last summer, I was completely delusional. I didn't trust anyone, I didn't understand reality, I felt like I was surrounded by actors telling me lies. This made me miserable and tired. One day I chose to believe what I thought were lies. I thought to myself, I can't go on living in this fear. I am just going to accept what is happening to be real, and see what happens. This was my first step to wellness. A great leap back into the real world, and I am so grateful that I took it. I think people who refuse to change do so out of fear. I imagine they fear change, because they believe it will lead to instability or possibly madness. Who knows? A new favorite song of mine is "Change" by Blind Melon, and my favorite line is "Life is hard you have to change."

Author

stevlevin

Joined: 02 Dec 2004
Posts: 1
Location: California

Message

Posted: Sun Jan 30, 2005 4:23 pm Post subject:

I have not read the book yet either, but this topic hits close to home for me. The ability to change and adapt, and fully realize our own potentials is something that has been on my mind a lot. You asked if we had had an experience where we chose our attitude. I have one, but it is quite strange, and this subject might be hard for some to swallow. I experienced a

psychotic depression last summer, I was completely delusional. I didn't trust anyone, I didn't understand reality, I felt like I was surrounded by actors telling me lies. This made me miserable and tired. One day I chose to believe what I thought were lies. I thought to myself, I can't go on living in this fear. I am just going to accept what is happening to be real, and see what happens. This was my first step to wellness. A great leap back into the real world, and I am so grateful that I took it. I think people who refuse to change do so out of fear. I imagine they fear change, because they believe it will lead to instability or possibly madness. Who knows? A new favorite song of mine is "Change" by Blind Melon, and my favorite line is "Life is hard you have to change."

Author

stevlevin

Joined: 02 Dec 2004

Posts: 1

Location: California

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 04, 2005 9:26 pm Post subject: Choosing attitude when you "don't feel like it"

Hello Alex and others,

I am fascinated by the effect of attitudes and moods on one's ability to be resourceful. I find this:

On a "good day," I am resourceful and flexible. I cope easily with difficult circumstances and take the stance of an owner.

On a "pretty good day," I may not feel resourceful, but I'm aware of being down and shift my frame of mind through movement, heartfelt discussion, or lots of other ways to take charge. I do this because I want to get someplace different than where I am stuck.

On a "bad day," I don't feel resourceful and for some enigmatic reason I don't "want to change." Please note: I am completely aware of my suffering and fully accept that this is mine to live with or change. I have no illusions of being victimized by others (although there is often mental chatter saying that others are to blame). Rather, I stay stuck not as a logical choice, but as a kind of emotional obstinacy. I don't think I'm alone in this.

The question is, why? Despite awareness and skill, what sometimes keeps me and others from taking known steps to liberate ourselves from this prison?

I invite exploration of this topic, and there are many ideas to explore, e.g.:

- there is a "deeper wound" that is being expressed which, until acknowledged, will continue to demand attention. Some might call it a shadow, in the Jungian sense.

- the root of the problem is that the suffering I experience has a strong dissociative quality, such that the energy (or depression) cannot shift until it is fully acknowledged.

- despite my espoused desire to change, I am more committed to the comfort of familiar suffering. Nothing will happen until the "pain and gain" of the situation is more explicit.

What do you think?

Author

stateofmind_77

Joined: 30 Jan 2005

Posts: 20

Location: California

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 04, 2005 9:57 pm Post subject: It is amazing

How much I feel a connection to you D. I read some portions of a book titled Working the Organizing Experience: Transforming Psychotic, Schizoid, and Autistic States by Lawrence E. Hedges. This book helped open my eyes and remember my "wound". I was neglected and abandoned as an infant by my mother. According to a theory mentioned in the book, called the "dead mother" theory, this led to my adult behavior.

"The concept of the `dead mother' describes a clinical phenomenon, sometimes difficult to identify, but always present in a substantial number of patients. It describes a process by which the image of a living and loving mother is transformed into a distant figure: a toneless, practically inanimate, dead parent. In reality, the mother remains alive, but she has psychically 'died' for the child. This produces a depression in the child, who carries these feelings within him or her into adult life, as the experience of the loss of the mother's love is followed by the loss of meaning in life. Nothing makes sense any more for the child, but life seems to continue under the appearance of normality". (found at the following link: <http://www.psychanalysis.org.uk/green.htm>)

Another interesting subject that an acquaintance of mine brought up has to do with type theory. He believes that if you behave out of type for any substantial amount of time, it will lead to neurosis. I was being forced at the time of my depression to act out of character. I was in the military and had been placed in a position with a lot of authority, and I was in no way prepared. I plan on purchasing that book mentioned in the earlier link, I have a feeling I will learn a lot from it.

Author

deepwaters

Joined: 04 Feb 2005

Posts: 6

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 04, 2005 10:35 pm Post subject: Re: It is amazing

I'm not aware of research that supports this. I allow that Type is useful for understanding oneself, but its difficulty is that it easily places people into boxes in which they hide from their possibilities for range and change. Now comes the assertion that acting "out of type" leads to neurosis. I hope this isn't so! Does anyone have more information on this?

Author

stateofmind_77

Joined: 30 Jan 2005
Posts: 20
Location: California

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 04, 2005 11:01 pm Post subject: Jung

To be honest with you, I just learned of this today. Here is what I was able to find on the subject:

"STORY. Jung concluded that every person has a story, and when derangement occurs, it is because the personal story has been denied or rejected. Healing and integration comes when the person discovers or rediscovers his or her own personal story.

NEUROSIS. Jung had a hunch that what passed for normality often was the very force which shattered the personality of the patient. That trying to be "normal", when this violates our inner nature, is itself a form of pathology. In the psychiatric hospital, he wondered why psychiatrists were not interested in what their patients had to say. "

<http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/Jungsum.html>

Here is what my acquaintance said:

"What you had was a case of False Typing.
By you "feeling forced to act out of character" you suffered from neurosis in one form or another.
Jung said this would happen as it does.
Yet most books on Type don't mention this, for they are too dumb to have read any Jung for themselves and are clueless to these results.
Yet they write their Type books none the less and pair different Types together! You don't even have to read Jung, just look around you."

And last but not least, this site has a wealth of information:

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/perscontents.html>

I did not mean to lead you into fear.

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 06, 2005 4:34 pm Post subject: Heights versus Depths

This message is somewhat generic in that it is a response to several recent postings. By the way, dear stateofmind_77, I apologize for not responding to your initial post more quickly.

My "concern," at this point, is that I'm not sure if those of you who are contributing to this conversation have yet read my book! 😊

I'm afraid that, unless you do so, we will continue to dive into and focus solely upon what is called, "depth psychology"--which is not the intent of this conversation! On the contrary, Viktor Frankl (and, by association, Alex Pattakos) are proponents of "height psychology!" In this regard, I would like this conversation to avoid placing people in "boxes" or personality types and focus instead on the human quest for meaning. When you read my book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, as well as read Frankl's work directly, you will know what I "mean" (no pun intended) by this statement.

Now, concerning stevlevin's posting on being "resourceful," thank you for sharing your insights with our community of continuous learners. Indeed, I'm glad to know that you are so aware of the emotions/feelings that underlie your (non)responses to different situations on different kinds of days. To be sure, this is very valuable information for you to ponder. You ask: "Despite awareness and skill, what sometimes keeps me and others from taking down steps to liberate ourselves from this prison?" Well, in your post, you have identified some possibilities that may be worth exploring from a "depth" psychology perspective. This said, and not to marginalize the potential significance of exploring such deep-seated issues through intensive psychotherapy or psychoanalysis, let me also suggest that you read my book! Among other things, you'll find that human "capacity" for any kind of change, be it constructive and developmental or destructive and regressive, requires both the *ability* (i.e., knowledge, skills, and aptitude) AND the **willingness** to engage in the change. As the saying goes, "Whether you think that you can or you think that you can't, you're right!"

Author

stateofmind_77

Joined: 30 Jan 2005

Posts: 20

Location: California

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 06, 2005 5:35 pm Post subject: Heighth/Depth

Hello Alex, I want to apologize if I took this thread in the wrong direction, that was not my intention. I also was not trying to promote typing, it is just something I find very interesting. Also, though the MBTI is based off of Jung's works, it does not take into account all of his teachings. I feel like Jung and Frankl had at least a little in common. Imminently Jung believed that the ultimate goal in life was to realize self, which to me is similar to finding meaning. According to the link I referenced in my earlier post, Jung felt that once you realize your self you know that: "You are then neither and both male and female, neither and both ego and shadow, neither and both good and bad, neither and both conscious and unconscious, neither and both an individual and the whole of creation." In my opinion, Jung did not want to fit people into boxes, rather he wanted to help people discover that they are a little bit of everything.

Another similarity between Jung and Frankl, in my opinion, was their view on the personal story. From the link again, I quote: "On the spiritual level Frankl views depression as 'tension between what the person is and what he ought to be.'" Frankl also suggested that the ultimate means of achieving meaning was by way of suffering. Looking at our "wounds" is to me a form of revisiting that suffering we experienced in the past, and is a way in which we can find meaning in our present lives. Also both Frankl and Jung were advocates of the ideal of transcendence.

One more thing I feel I should mention is that (quoting once more) : "Jung begins with the highest levels - even spiritualism - and derives the lower levels of psychology and physiology from them."

P.S. Both books are in the mail, on their way to me, so I hope to contribute in a better fashion to this thread in the future.

Author

debbekennedy

Joined: 27 Oct 2004

Posts: 96

Location: global dialogue center

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 06, 2005 10:18 pm Post subject:

Hi everyone...

We've got something lively going here! 😊

So many great perspectives to take in. Alex's book, especially focusing on one principle at a time here, is really raising my consciousness day-to-day. The examples he gives help you to observe your own actions, behavior, past and present. I read it --- but I am really learning about myself more by this more focused way of taking it in and studying each principle.

Stevlevin's question for us to consider really hit home for me... and I'm imagining for most anyone: **"Despite awareness and skill, what sometimes keeps me and others from taking known steps to liberate ourselves from this prison?"**

After years of working on this myself with a long struggle to liberate myself from my "prison camp" ...and through my work with others working through major changes, I have formed a few conclusions in answer to this question. I note they are similar to what stevelevin describes.

I think *taking action* is a paradox. One one hand, it is freeing. It feels good to be in *motion*. Heading in the right direction. DOING, at last! On the other hand, even the most action-oriented find themselves temporarily paralyzed by the thought of *taking action* at times. It's scary to act or change ourselves or our attitudes about things. Why do we hesitate, run back to what's familiar, start over or divert our attention elsewhere to avoid taking that first step forward --- especially when INACTION is most often so painful? It causes us to worry. We lose confidence. Problems get more complex. New ones surface. Pressure mounts. Others begin to notice, and more often than not, it begins to impact others at some point.

[Why?] *Taking action* requires more of us. It means letting go of the familiar. It often means paving a new path. Risking. Doing something we know little about or that maybe has never been done. It makes us vulnerable, exposed. My experience is that we shelter ourselves from it. The longer we talk, analyze, work to crystallize the perfect words to describe our unique issues, wait to find the just the right solutions, the longer we avoid having to ACT----having to figure out *what to do* and risk *doing it*.

Even with the most complicated, deep personal changes in my life, in the end, I found ACTION or INACTION were the two distinct CHOICES. Painful, sometimes difficult CHOICES that meant PUSHING through hard times. One freeing. One oppressive.

I'm interested to see what you all think about this perspective and learning about your experience.

Debbe

Author

bill.tipton116

Joined: 03 Nov 2004

Posts: 61

Location: San Jose

Message

Posted: Mon Feb 07, 2005 10:05 am Post subject:

Hi Alex,

Just wanted to say I listened to your interview on February 2nd on live National Public Radio (NPR) on-line and really enjoyed it! I thought it was very interesting.

To all, about the talk about action or no action and choices. I am going through one of those times I need to make a decision. I have the opportunity to take a trip in which I will need to travel by air. This means getting around in the airport, dealing with luggage (I use a cane in both hands, no free hands), getting to and from the airport and managing my diabetes. I have not done this since going blind. I have people who want to help and are recommending a lot of things, possibly confusing the situation. I know in my heart that I can do it, if I just take the chance, go for it and just do it. The hesitation is, I can take the easy way out and wait for all of this help and be assured I get to and from my destination safely and easily. I am tempted to just say I can go on my own, even though I have never done it and just go for it. In the end I am sure it will work and I will be better for it. The next time I will not be as frightened if I just take the more difficult path now, instead of putting off the inevitable, traveling by air by myself.

In this example it seems I can take the easy way now, but eventually I will need to take the more difficult choice if I want to continue to grow and it might be better to just take the difficult choice now and move forward instead of standing still in my progress.

Have a great day and thanks.

Bill Tipton

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Mon Feb 07, 2005 12:49 pm Post subject: Food-for-Thought

Hello everyone!

Wow, it's great to see this thread of conversation evolve so nicely. I want to thank each one of you who have participated thus far for your insightful postings. And for those of you who are still "observing," I hope that you, too, are finding value in the conversation. Of course, feel free to **take action** and join in at any time! 😊

I'd like to now share with you a few brief thoughts:

➡ Although I highly respect the wisdom of Carl Jung and other "thought leaders" who may be relevant to this particular thread, I'm primarily interested in focusing our conversation on my book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, and the ideas of Viktor Frankl. For this reason, I would like to encourage all of you to read my book, if you haven't already, and join the conversation as soon as possible! The primary purpose of this seven-month, unique "window of opportunity" is for us to learn more about each of the 7 Principles introduced in my book and build our individual and collective **capacity** to apply them at work and in our personal lives. In this way, everyone (including me!) can obtain the highest return on investment from participating in this conversation.

👤 I'm sure that someone in the Global Dialogue Center "community" could volunteer to begin another thread to continue the conversation of Jung, etc.! Please don't let my perspective on the nature of human existence stop you! 😊

➡ Debbe's insight about the nature of *action* versus *inaction* should be underscored. Each of your recent posts demonstrates how important this issue can be. Moreover, I would like to suggest to all of you that the 2nd Principle in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, i.e., **realize your will to meaning**, provides a platform for making meaningful decisions and taking meaningful action. In this connection, I'd like to mention (and not simply for Bill's sake) Erik Weihenmayer, who climbed Mount Everest blind, even though there are probably some of us who would question if Erik's decisions and actions were reasonable! 😊

Further, we will discuss later another Principle in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* that brings into question the "power of intention." More specifically, we will explore how some times even our *actions* may get in the way of our best intentions! Alas, I'm sorry to say that there is no quick formula for success or for finding authentic meaning in our lives. It's hard work and, to be sure, taps into our very hearts and souls, not simply our minds. So, stay tuned!

Meaning-fully,
Alex

Author

deepwaters

Joined: 04 Feb 2005
Posts: 6

Message

Posted: Thu Feb 10, 2005 6:36 pm Post subject: Action and Will

I appreciate the quality of thinking about action and will. Siince Alex has pointed us in the direction of the February topic, I will write my reply in that thread. "See you" in Will to Meaning.

Author

Spencer St John

Joined: 17 May 2005

Posts: 3

Location: Tampa Florida

Message

Posted: Mon May 23, 2005 10:42 am Post subject:

Hello Bill.

My name is Spencer and I am new to this group. I have not yet been able to buy Mr Pattako's book, but I hope to get one soon. I don't have a credit card, and so I'm not able to purchase things online. I am also a monastic that takes the vows of poverty seriously. I own a bike. lol.

Several years ago, a friend of mine of 20 years fell ill and is going through the veteran's hospital for care. Because of the volume of patients, it is going to take a long time for him to be granted disability. When you are sick, things can get bad very quickly. He was afraid of losing his home where he had been raised as a child and he became very depressed and overwhelmed by it all. I moved in with him and have been there ever since.

I work at a Franciscan owned nursing center and, although my wages aren't very much, I have found that money goes a long way when it is spent with a certain meaning in mind. It is my meaing in life to help people and have been thinking of teaching some day.

I was touched by the fact that you could not read Mr Pattako's book. I am not sure if it is possible to buy an audio tape. Perhaps, if it is all right with Alex, we can find a way to make an audio tape for you. I would be willing to read and record it free of charge with his advice and instructions. I would have to buy a tape recorder and cover the cost of the book. Anyway..it is a thought. Hopefully, Mr. Pattakos can give us some idea's.

God Bless,

Spencer

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue May 24, 2005 3:16 pm Post subject: Audio Book

Hello Spencer,

Obviously, you have been reading the various postings that comprise this conversation. Excellent! And I'm sure that Bill will be touched by your latest contribution. Regarding an audio book version of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, I have been communicating with my publisher, Berrett-Koehler, who is responsible for such negotiating and authorizing such options. This said, I'm optimistic that an audio book eventually will be "published." So far, by the way, you'll be interested to know that the book is being translated into the following foreign languages: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish.

Thanks also for sharing a bit about yourself. Oh, before I forget, my last name is "Pattakos" not "Pattako." Please be aware that I come from a very proud Greek family with origins on the Island of Crete. I mention this because the Cretans would rather die than alter their family name! 😊

All the best,
Alex

Thread 11: 5th Principle – Look at Yourself from a Distance

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue May 03, 2005 9:46 pm Post subject: 5th Principle - Look at Yourself from a Distance

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
5th Principle ----Look at Yourself from a Distance

Welcome to the 5th conversation in the PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS dialogue series. I'm glad to "see" you if this is your first visit --- and I welcome you back if you visited or participated in our ongoing conversation. A special thanks goes to those who have shared their thoughts and stories. Also, I do want to acknowledge those of you participating in silence. Although we continue to have just a few people posting, there have been over 1500 people who have shown up in some way. I do sense your presence and I'm learning to appreciate that the fact you come here strongly suggests that *having MEANING in our lives* is a subject we want to think and talk about.

I want to mention two additional ways you can participate:

👉 Be sure to see the Viktor Frankl commemorative exhibit at the Global Dialogue Center's

KNOWLEDGE GALLERY. It is MEANINGFUL!

👉 Share your opinions in the **The Meaning in Work and Life Survey** --- [Click here to learn more](#)

OUR CONTINUING CONVERSATION:

So far in this dialogue series, we have explored four of Viktor Frankl's principles:

- Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude
- Realize your will to meaning
- Detect the meaning of life's moments
- Don't work against yourself

If you missed the first four discussions, they are still posted. I invite you to review them. Feel free to add your thoughts too. Others visiting will learn from your thinking and experiences. I do think you will benefit from the review as we move on to the 5th principle.

PRINCIPLE 5: Look at Yourself from a Distance --- Only human beings possess the capacity to look at themselves out of some perspective or distance, including the uniquely human trait known as your sense of humor.

In my book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, I share a story that highlights this principle: The ad in a London newspaper read '*Unemployed. Brilliant mind offers its services completely free; the survival of the body must be provided for by adequate salary.*' Viktor Frankl quoted this ad in his book, *The Doctor and the Soul* to make an important point about the different ways that people may respond to being unemployed. To be sure, Frankl was not in any way suggesting that unemployment is not a serious matter; on the contrary, he emphasizes that being unemployed is a '*tragedy because a job is the only source of livelihood for most people.*'

In this example, we can see that the person who placed the ad in the London newspaper turned a dire situation into something humorous because she was able to put some distance between herself and the issue at hand. The ad also reflects both her sense of humor and her innate, distinctly human, capacity to look at herself in a detached way and rise above her predicament.

This quality is truly a gift! Interestingly, having a sense of humor is usually accompanied by cheerfulness. This is another one of those misleading words. Most cheerful people I know have experienced real tragedy in their lives. Real cheerfulness is not have-a-nice-day artifice. It's a way of experiencing the present, no matter what the weight of the world or the weather. Cheerfulness celebrates the possibilities of meaning around every corner. It buoys us up beyond our individual concerns and invites us and others around us to find something to be happy about. This doesn't mean we hide behind cheerfulness. We simply lighten up, raise ourselves up and sometimes have a good laugh.

Viktor Frankl in his lectures and writings talked about the value of having a sense of humor. He described a kind of cabaret that was improvised in the concentration camp. The entertainment took the form of songs, poems, jokes and even stand-up comedy, some with underlying satire regarding the experiences in the camp. Frankl reported that any pursuit of art within the camp might seem somewhat grotesque, but the lesson was that it was possible to find a sense of humor in even the worst of circumstances.

~~~~~

We know that humor is a paramount way of putting distance between something and oneself. One might say as well, that humor helps man rise above his own predicament by allowing him to look at himself in a more detached way."

--- Viktor Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*

~~~~~

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION... Individual Reflection Activities

For our conversation this month, consider these questions from your own experience. With many of you out there in the distance, I encourage some of you who haven't yet posted to help us all learn from the process by sharing from your memories...

Can you recall a situation in your work or life when you felt the need to distance yourself before you could find a proper resolution to the situation (e.g., perhaps this was a business decision that wasn't aligned with your values or an emergency situation that required swift action.)

How did you distance or detach yourself from the situation?

How did you distance or detach yourself from YOURSELF, so you could objectively look at your own behavior and actions?

What did you learn from it?

What did you learn about your capacity for self-detachment?

What role, if any, did humor play in helping you through the situation?

Looking back, what would you have done differently?

I look forward to hearing from you. I'll be checking in from time to time and look forward learning from you about what you've learned about looking at yourself from a distance!

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
founder and managing director, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Thread 12: 4th Principle – Don't Work Against Yourself

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Fri Apr 01, 2005 7:32 am Post subject: 4th Principle - Don't Work Against Yourself

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.

4th Principle ---- Don't work against yourself

Welcome to the 4th conversation in the PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS dialogue series. I'm glad to "see" you if this is your first visit --- and I welcome you back if you visited or participated during the months of January, February or March.

Early in February, I reported that we had over 100 people come to READ the Prisoners of Our Thoughts discussion at 24seven Conversations. As of the end of March, over 1000 people have stopped by to take in the messages in this ongoing conversation. This still remains a strong indicator to me that having MEANING in our lives is a topic that many of us are interested in exploring.

So far in this dialogue series, we have explored three of Viktor Frankl's principles:

---- Exercise the Freedom to Choose Your Attitude

---- Realize Your Will to Meaning

---- Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments

If you missed these discussions, they are still posted. I invite you to to review them and add your thoughts!!!. I think you will benefit from the review as we move on to the fourth principle.

PRINCIPLE 4: --- Don't work against yourself

Avoid becoming so obsessed with or fixated on an intent or outcome that you actually work against the desired result.

Have you ever worked so hard at something that the more you tried the harder the task became and the farther away it seemed you got from your goal? In such situations, it is common for us to cast the blame on everyone or anyone else... or at least to shift bulk of responsibility for failing to reach our objectives on to others. In Prisoners of Our Thoughts, I share a personal example of working against myself---one that had far-reaching implications and meaningful lessons. In reflection, I had several realizations:

- I had tried too hard to get everything done "my way."
- This in turn, estranged me from the colleagues who were essential to the overall success I was working to achieve.
- My fixation on the "right" way to do things, marginalized the contribution of others involved, including subtle sabotage.
- Paradoxically, I had become my own worst enemy and didn't even know it.

Even when the stakes are high and our success essential, focusing on the results rather than the process can actually get in the way of a successful outcome. We all know how it works: our nervousness and anxiety about "getting it right" keep us from getting it right. The higher our expectations about something, the more disconnected we are from the actual accomplishment of it all and the less able we are to participate in its successful unfolding. Our good intentions actually become the cause of our failure.

Viktor Frankl calls this paradoxical intention. When a specific success is so fervently sought that we overlook and neglect the relationships that are an integral part of the process, we lay the seed for something to go wrong. We fly in the face of our own success. We neglect our own meaning, the meaning of others, and the meaning of the process.

~~~~~

**"The job at which one works is not what counts, but rather the manner in which one does the work. --- Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul***

~~~~~

For our conversation this month, consider these questions from you own experience...and write in to tell us your story. This will help us all learn from the process...

Can you recall a situation in your work life in which the harder you worked to achieve an outcome the farther away you seemed to be from the goal?

What made you recognize that you were not making progress?

How did you rationalize or justify your dilemma? Who did you blame?

To what extent did you feel you were working against yourself?

What did you do about it? What did you learn from it?

I welcome hearing from you and will enjoy reading your posts. I'll be checking in from time to time and look forward learning from you about what you've learned about the value in not working against yourself.

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
founder and managing director, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Author

bill.tipton116

Joined: 03 Nov 2004

Posts: 61

Location: San Jose

Message

Posted: Sat Apr 23, 2005 7:00 am Post subject: Re: APRIL 2005 - Don't Work Against Yourself

Hi Alex,

I hope you've been well. I will answer the questions below yours.

Can you recall a situation in your work life in which the harder you worked to achieve an outcome the farther away you seemed to be from the goal?

After going blind suddenly I thought I could return to work immediately and be productive. My mind was fogged with that one goal in mind so I worked day and night learning to walk again, learning new assistive software and hardware, and other blindness related skills to be productive and safe in the community.

What made you recognize that you were not making progress?

I was getting very tired due to lack of sleep and frustration. I realized since I had never

even talked to a blind person prior to going blind I just might not know everything. I was not completely aware of all the re-skilling I needed to do to accomplish my goals.

How did you rationalize or justify your dilemma? Who did you blame?

I first blamed others. I also thought if I spent less time sleeping I could accomplish more. I also blamed myself for taking on unneeded task or projects prior to knowing all the details and if the specific task was even necessary to meet my goals.

To what extent did you feel you were working against yourself?

I was doing things so fast with no time to look at the big picture. I was so worried about not succeeding I may have sacrificed things in my quest to meet my goals.

What did you do about it? What did you learn from it?

I forged forward hard and met my goals. I no longer waited for outside help in which I had no control over. I still accepted grate advice and coaching from friends. I learned I had to sacrifice some learning opportunities to focus on others I thought were more critical to reach my goals. I just hope I did not skip any critical learnings. I plan to catch up on the learnings I put on the back burner in my quest to reach my goals. I also learned if you want something you should not wait for it, you should go after it.

Have a great day,

Bill

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sat Apr 23, 2005 4:45 pm Post subject: The BIG Picture

Hello Bill,

Thank you so much for sharing your personal experience and perspective on this particular "Core Principle of the Month." At some level, I think that we all can resonate with what you have described. Life's challenges come in many different forms and it's not always easy--or even very clear--how best to respond to them. Our willingness to accept responsibility for our attitude and actions rather than blame others and, as you point out, "forge forward" to achieve our meaning-full goals is fundamental to living and working with integrity. At the same time, it is important for us to "pop up" and see the BIG picture every now and then so that we don't work against ourselves. Viktor Frankl called this "paradoxical intention." Some times we become so fixated on an intended outcome that we effectively restrict the degrees of freedom at our disposal to be truly effective (i.e., the paradox). Think for a moment of a fly buzzing frantically at a closed window, trying so hard to get out of a room. And while there is an open door at the other side, the fly eventually dies on the window sill, even though it worked with the best intentions in mind! The more it focused on the "closed"

window, the less it was able to sense the "open" door!

Thanks again, Bill.

Alex

Thread 13: 3rd Principle – Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue Mar 01, 2005 1:12 am Post subject: 3rd Principle - Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
3rd Principle ---- Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments

Welcome to the PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS conversation series.I'm glad to "see" you if this is your first visit --- and I welcome you back if you visited or participated during the months of January and February.

Early in February, I reported that we had over 100 people come to READ the Prisoners of Our Thoughts discussion at 24seven Conversations in January. As of the end of February, we've had well over 800 people stop by to READ our dialogue and meaningful POSTS were contributed from some of you. This says to me that having MEANING in our lives is a topic that many of us are interested in exploring.

During the first two months, we worked on the first two of Viktor Frankl's principles, Exercise the Freedom to Choose Your Attitude and Realize Your Will to Meaning. If you missed these discussions, they are still posted. Take time to review them. I think you will benefit from the review as we move on to the third principle.

PRINCIPLE 3: 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.

We don't create meaning; we find it. And we can't find it if we don't look for it. Meaning comes to us in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it looms big in our lives; sometimes it slips in almost unobserved. Sometimes we miss a meaningful moment entirely until days, months, or even years go by and then suddenly something that once seemed insignificant becomes a pivotal, life-changing moment. Sometimes, too, it is the collective meaning of many moments that finally catches our mind's eye; as if we weave together a living quilt from patches of moments that, by themselves, would have passed us by unnoticed. And although we are not always aware of it, meaning, Frankl would say, is in every present moment. ...All we have to do, in our daily life and at work, is to wake up to meaning and

take notice.

“Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now! ...The true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche... --- Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

It all comes down to awareness. In this regard, it has been said that “it is more important to be aware than it is to be smart.” To be aware is to know meaning. To be aware takes time. It asks more of us. If our lives are propelled by nothing but things piling up to respond to or the passive preoccupation with television, we lose out on meaning. We have to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste meaning if it's going to exist in our lives.

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION... Individual Action & Reflection Activities

With this third **Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments** principle, I want to encourage you to get personally involved. To really take away the full meaning of this principle, you must experience the meaning in it yourself. You need to discover it.

Two Ways to Experience the Meaning for Yourself:

👉 In the chapter, **Detect the Meaning of Life's Moments** (Page 79) in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, there are two exercises beginning on page 93. One is called High Altitude Thinking and one is called the Eulogy Exercise. Read about them and do one or both. Come back and tell us about the meaning you discovered for yourself and bring your questions.

👉 Recall a situation in your work life in which you were forced to deal with the fear of change (this may even be your situation today). Perhaps you were:

- Facing a down-sizing or merger
- A change in management/leadership style
- The need for job re-training
- Retirement or other major life change impacting your work

How did you first come to recognize the fear of change?

What if anything, did you actually do about it?

What did you learn from it? What meaning did you discover in it?

What did you learn about your ability to confront your fears and respond to change?

I invite you to share your thoughts and experiences...ask a question, share an opinion. I welcome hearing from you and will enjoy reading your posts. I'll be checking in from time to time and look forward learning [from you](#) about how you are working to detect the meaning of life's moments.

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*
founder and managing director, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Thread 14: 2nd Principle – Realize Your Will to Meaning

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Tue Feb 01, 2005 6:12 am Post subject: 2nd Principle - Realize Your Will to Meaning

PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D. **2nd Principle ---- Realize your will to meaning**

Welcome to the *PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS* conversation series. I'm glad to "see" you and welcome you back if you visited or participated during the month of January when we worked on the first of Viktor Frankl's principles, *Exercise the Freedom to Choose Your Attitude*. If you missed the discussion, it is still posted under this conversation forum. I think you will benefit from reviewing it as we move on to the second principle:

 **PRINCIPLE 2: REALIZE YOUR WILL TO MEANING** --- commit authentically to meaningful values and goals that only you can actualize and fulfill.

Unlike Sigmund Freud's belief that as human beings we are driven by our will for pleasure, known as the *Pleasure Principle*, or Alfred Adler's belief in our *striving for superiority or will for power*, Frankl considers our main concern as people to be fulfilling a meaning and actualizing values --- *will to meaning* --- rather than simply the gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts. In *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, I cite a number of business examples we all recognize for each of these principles:

• **Will to Pleasure** – Tyco CEO Dennis Kozlowski's \$2 Million birthday bash that he threw for his wife at company expense.

• **Will to Power** – Ken Lay (Enron) and Bernie Ebbers (Worldcom).

• **Will to Meaning** - Those CEOs, who although they may also want (or seek) pleasure and authority, demonstrate that the primary motivation for their existence is neither. Bill Hewlett and David Packard demonstrated Frankl's will to meaning principle, building Hewlett-Packard from a one-car garage into one of the world's most admired success stories. It was a particular set of meaningful values, known as The HP Way that guided them in identifying and meeting their objectives, in working with one another, and in dealing with customers, shareholders, employees and others.

"A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the 'why' for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any 'how'."

--- **Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning***

PUTTING MEANING INTO THIS CONVERSATION...

I'd like know what you've experienced ... and observed in your work and everyday life.

Recall a situation in your work life where you were challenged to examine your commitment to meaningful values or goals. This may even be your current situation. Perhaps it was or is a job assignment that isn't lining up with your personal values. Perhaps you were or are just unhappy with the work you are doing.

Consider these questions...

- How did you first recognize this challenge? What were the first signs?
- What, if anything, did you do? What would you like to do?
- How to you ensure that you remain committed to meaningful values and goals, thereby realizing your will to meaning at work or in your workplace?

We had well over 100 people come to READ the *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* discussion in January and we had a few BRAVE friends who posted. As we move on, getting to know one another better, I invite you to share your thoughts and experiences. I'll be checking in from time to time and look forward learning about how you have recognized and continue to realize your will to meaning.

All the best,

Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*
founder and managing director, Center for Personal Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.prisonersofourthoughts.com

Author

stateofmind_77

Joined: 30 Jan 2005
Posts: 20
Location: California

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 06, 2005 2:19 am Post subject:

"How did you first recognize this challenge? What were the first signs?"

I am currently a student in college, so I will answer this question in regards to my previous employment. I was an enlisted member of the Navy, my position was as a survival equipment technician. I was unhappy. I was presented the challenge of being a shift supervisor. This came about after several members of my workcenter transferred.

"What, if anything, did you do? What would you like to do?"

I failed miserably, my shift members walked all over me, and I lost all confidence in myself and my abilities. I would have like to have been more competent, but looking back I believe the position was too far of a step away from my personality and my values.

"How to you ensure that you remain committed to meaningful values and goals, thereby realizing your will to meaning at work or in your workplace?"

One of the values that is easy for me to remain committed to, is my respect for others, no matter how they treat me. I do this by remembering that we all come from different places, and we all have issues, and sometimes we don't mean to come across the way we do. In the past I was unsure of my goals. Currently I am re-examining my life and my goals. This is a deep thought process and requires a lot of introspection. I am working on becoming a librarian, I highly value the search for knowledge, and as a librarian I hope to guide others on this path.

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 06, 2005 4:51 pm Post subject: The Re-Examined Life

Dear stateofmind_77,

As always, I want to thank you for your participation in this conversation! I personally value your contributions. I hope that you find something of value from this conversation too.

Thanks for sharing a bit of your military/employment experience with us. What, may I ask, did you "learn" from the experience? And, importantly, how are you "growing" from the experience? These, I suggest, are important *meaning-focused* questions that are fundamental to examining our lives in an authentic way.

I am glad to hear that you are committed to the value of respecting others. Are there core values that you find are not easy to remain committed to? Do you use the same "deep thought process" to address value conflicts that may arise?

I wish you the very best with your academic pursuits and am sure that you will be an excellent librarian!

Author

deepwaters

Joined: 04 Feb 2005

Posts: 6

Message

Posted: Thu Feb 10, 2005 6:24 pm Post subject: About Will to Meaning

Hello Alex and all,

I love the phrase, "*will to meaning*." It suggests to me that there is a life force that insists on coherence, integration, and connection to something larger than myself.

When I am at my best, this seems effortless. There is an easy flow as my purpose, intentions, and activities all line up nicely with deeply felt values. I experience "mere joy." During these moments, I have not "found" meaning, but rather I am creating it.

On more difficult days, I am confused. I can't quite seem to remember why I am engaged in all this activity. The flow of meaning has been interrupted, either by some vague fear, or perhaps by a lapse of intention, or....what?

I might go back to bed, review my writing about purpose or goals, or take a walk, or have a personal conversation with a close friend...but these do not by themselves return me to a state of meaning-making. There is something infuriatingly elusive about returning to a state of creativity and flow.

So my inquiry is... what are the conditions under which we are in the mode of creation...generating meaning...and when does this get interrupted?

And when we are feeling resourceless, lonely, alienated...what are our choices for returning to a more resourceful state?

Author

deepwaters

Joined: 04 Feb 2005

Posts: 6

Message

Posted: Thu Feb 10, 2005 6:45 pm Post subject: Action and Will

In the January thread on Choosing Attitude, several intriguing points were raised:

- Action or Inaction is the key choice. (Thinking, reasoning, emoting, etc. may just serve to defer action.)

- Knowledge, skills, attitudes are fine...but Will is essential to get moving.

(I hope I've summarized with reasonable accuracy.)

I agree that Will is the key to action. But...what is Will? Where does it come from, and what supports or destroys it?

My first response would be to turn to *mood*. When I am in a mood of ambition or acceptance, the path forward seems clear. Will is abundant. When I am in a mood of resentment or resignation...well, who cares?

Yet I suspect that this response is too closely tied to the depth psychology approach...and perhaps it misses the essential contribution of Frankl's (and Alex's) work.

What do you think? What supports or inhibits Will? What is its nature?

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 11, 2005 6:22 am Post subject: "Detect" rather than "Create"

Dear Deepwaters,

In *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, you'll note that I assert that meaning is everywhere, in every moment. Frankl is quoted as saying: "In the final analysis, there is no situation which does not contain the seed of meaning."

As Agent Mulder advised Agent Skulley in the television program, *X Files*, "the truth is out there!" It's up to each and everyone of us to detect or discover the meaning in our lives. In this regard, we don't really create meaning *per se*, even though it seems like we do some times, especially during the "aha" or Eureka moments.

The Will to Meaning, in this context, relates to our **Core Values** and is the Principle that, if we let it, guides our thoughts and actions. As a Core Value and Principle, it really doesn't "go anywhere" when our mood shifts! Instead, we experience a disconnect with it, some times replacing it with the Will to Power, and its primitive form, the Will to Money, or the Will to Pleasure. Since these other "Wills" are fleeting and "external" to our true, authentic selves, we frequently feel "empty" (what Frankl calls the "existential vacuum") and this exacerbates our so-called "mood."

Physiological determinants aside (chemical imbalances, for example, have been found to account for mood swings), our Will to Meaning is always "there" for us to connect with and rely upon, just like our "shadow" (unlike poor Peter Pan) is always with us even when we don't "see" it. What makes us *resilient* to life's challenges also helps and guides us back to our Will to Meaning.

The Will to Meaning, as I describe in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, relates to our authentic commitment to meaningful values and goals. Frankl, like so many other great thinkers, underscored that love is the most important of these values. Love, moreover, is not something "out there" a la the X FILES; rather, it is inside of us, albeit in "seed" form for many of us, it would seem. Our mission, should we decide to accept it, is to find ways to "A Return to Love" (see Marianne Williamson's book by this title) and be "willing" to consciously explore our personal labyrinth of meaning (see: Chapter 3 of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*). I know from my own personal experience that the more I remain conscious of, and committed to, my **Will to Meaning**, the "easier" (not really the best descriptor) it has become for me to rely upon it and, as a result, deal with situations that confront me. I challenge everyone to do the same!

Meaningfully,
Alex

Author

deepwaters

Joined: 04 Feb 2005

Posts: 6

Message

Posted: Sun Feb 13, 2005 10:53 pm Post subject: Re: "Detect" rather than "Create"

Alex, I appreciate your reframing Meaning as something to be reconnected with, not created. This is a wonderful paradox, that we are beings that create - we "make it happen" on so many levels, yet at the most basic level, nothing needs to "happen" so much as to be recognized.

Once I was expressing appreciation to a friend who had helped me to find my way during a difficult moment. "Thanks for helping me to get connected," I said. She smiled and said, "We already are...we just forget."

Best,
DW

#3 THE MEANING DIFFERENCE --- SURVEY

Thread 1: 2005 MEANING OF WORK AND LIFE SURVEY

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005

Posts: 30

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Wed Dec 28, 2005 9:25 pm Post subject: RESULTS OF THE 2005 MEANING IN WORK AND LIFE SURVEY

RESULTS OF THE 2005 MEANING IN WORK AND LIFE SURVEY

Thanks to all of you that participated in the 2005 *Meaning in Work and Life Survey*. We are compiling the results and will be posting a summary at the Global Dialogue Center early in 2006.

I will also be posting a downloadable PDF article about finding deeper meaning and fulfillment in your life to show my appreciation for your participation.

Again, I invite your to participate in the 2006 survey. It has a little different approach, more

specific questions and offers an opportunity for you to share your thoughts. Please note that your responses will be kept STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. The responses will be compiled to share without names.

[Learn more...](#) (See Thread 2 that follows: **2006 – THE MEANING DIFFERENCE SURVEY**)

Meaning-fully,
Alex

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
founder, Center for Meaning
Santa Fe, NM USA - www.centerformeaning.com

Contact Dr. Pattakos at the Global Dialogue Center. Be sure to reference his name and include your contact information.

Thread 2: 2006 THE MEANING DIFFERENCE SURVEY

Author

ALEX PATTAKOS

Joined: 02 Jan 2005
Posts: 30
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico USA

Message

Posted: Wed Dec 28, 2005 9:06 pm Post subject: 2006 - THE MEANING DIFFERENCE SURVEY



Exploring THE MEANING DIFFERENCE Survey

Share your opinions and experience to help all of us learn more about finding deeper meaning and fulfillment in our lives and work.

The *Center for Meaning* is conducting a survey that explores the human quest for meaning and how it makes a difference in our lives. We would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey, which consists of five open-ended questions. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so feel free to write down whatever comes to mind--- whatever you might be thinking or feeling about each question at the time.

How will the data be used?

Please note that your responses will be kept STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. The responses will be compiled to share without names.

Will the results be shared?

Yes. The Center for Meaning in partnership with the Global Dialogue Center will be posting links to the results, as well as providing a downloadable PDF copy of an article on The Meaning Difference. In addition, the results will be used to seed further dialogue on this important topic at the Global Dialogue Center.

PUT YOUR FINGERPRINT ON THE RESULTS:

http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/meaning_survey_0506.html

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.
author, Prisoners of Our Thoughts
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Santa Fe, NM USA - www.centerformeaning.com

#4 ALEX PATTAKOS --- UPCOMING EVENTS, BOOK REVIEWS, BUY HIS BOOK

Thread 2: BOOK REVIEW --- PRINSONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

Author

24sevenTEAM
Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004
Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Mon Aug 01, 2005 9:17 am Post subject: BOOK REVIEW ---- PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

BOOK REVIEW

Prisoners of Our Thoughts
Viktor Frankl's Principles at Work
By: Alex Pattakos, Stephen R. Covey
207 pp. Berrett-Koehler

Review by Lydia Morris Brown --- [Business Book Review™](#)

World-renowned psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl's personal story of discovering a reason to live in the Nazi concentration camps has inspired millions. In the foreword of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, Stephen Covey (*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*) says, of this seminal work, *Man's Search for Meaning* (considered one of the most important works of modern times), *The Doctor and the Soul*, and Frankl's other writings and lectures, that they stand as a reaffirmation of "... our power of choice, our unique endowment of self-awareness, and our essence, our will for meaning." Now, doing for the phenomenon of work what Frankl, the psychiatrist, did for the field of psychotherapy, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* supplies a conceptual foundation, as well as practical guidance, for bringing the will for meaning to the workplace and to the everyday experiences of people in every walk of life.

Drawing on the entire body of Frankl's work (he wrote more than 30 books), Pattakos illustrates his philosophy through seven easy-to-understand-and-apply principles for informing and inspiring both the CEO and the average worker: (1) Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude. (2) Realize your will to meaning. (3) Detect the meaning of life's moments. (4) Don't work against yourself. (5) Look at yourself from a distance. (6) Shift your focus of attention. (7) Extend beyond yourself.

Nonetheless, these principles, which Pattakos offers as effective tools for increasing one's capacity to deal with work challenges, finding meaning in daily work life, and achieving your highest potential, represent a philosophy of life that transcends the workplace, and in doing so, naturally includes it. This philosophy, logotherapy (therapy through meaning), is Frankl's unique approach to a system known as humanistic existential psychotherapy. It is active and directive, in that it aims to help people who are in a crisis of meaning in the totality of their lives; it emphasizes the freedom of the will and the consequent responsibility of that freedom; and it takes the position that, no matter what the state of one's environment, one's attitude is the overarching transformative factor. Though this is a nontheistic approach to life, Frankl's applications (and Pattakos's interpretations) tend to be "unscientific" notions of soul, conscious, and spiritualism, grounded in a fundamental religiosity. The idea is for the CEO and the average worker to become "change catalyst[s] ... transition figure[s]"—who live the principles and share or teach them one by one to those with whom they live and work.

The author's intent, then, is for *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* to become more than just another "business" book gathering dust on a shelf but for Frankl's message to be "branded" on the reader's soul so that his ideas become the reader's mission. Thus, in addition to "reading" the book, Pattakos (and Covey) require one to "live" it by practicing the many exercises, reviewing the concepts and examples, and adopting the core principles into one's daily life. In addition, the work also seems to beg for further study into Frankl's life, into logotherapy, and into Frankl's boy of work that has been translated into English.

Thus, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* stands as the beginning of a journey, which, though it may end in the boardroom, the backroom, or in the cab of an 18-wheeler, must start as an impetus for the clarification, strengthening, and liberation of the self, for reforming one's consciousness, and elevating the soul, regardless of what is, or is not, happening in the workplace. With this as one's a priori work in progress—one's solid framework for action in life—it seems that meaning and motivation cannot help but to emerge naturally on the job and be intrinsically and firmly linked to it.

Thread 4: Don't miss the VIKTOR FRANKL Knowledge Gallery Exhibit

Author

24sevenTEAM

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Sun Apr 17, 2005 12:42 pm Post subject: Don't miss the VIKTOR FRANKL Knowledge Gallery Exhibit

Don't miss the VIKTOR FRANKL Knowledge Gallery Exhibit

Our **Knowledge Gallery** at the **Global Dialogue Center** is honored to show VIKTOR FRANKL: THE MAN, HIS MESSAGE and HIS PRINCIPLES, a new moving self-learning exhibit commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Viktor Frankl's birth and his inspiring work.

The exhibit features the influences of scholars Dr. Alex Pattakos and renowned futurist, Joel A. Barker and their interpretations of Frankl's enduring legacy, along with the artistic expression from Bay Area artist, Sally K. Green, who created the exhibit in his honor.

<http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/ViktorFrankl.html>

We extend a personal invitation to YOU to visit --- we welcome your stories and I look forward to you feedback, which will be shared with others around the world.

Your 24sevenTEAM

gdc@globaldialoguecenter.com

Thread 5: LISTEN TO ALEX PATTAKOS – NPR Interview

Author

24sevenTEAM

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Fri Apr 01, 2005 7:36 am Post subject: LISTEN TO ALEX PATTAKOS - NPR Interview

LISTEN TO ALEX PATTAKOS - NPR Interview

Recently Alex talked openly in an National Public Radio interview. We've loaded up the audio so you can hear him first-hand. Go to:

<http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/24-7-conversations.html>

Your 24seven Team

Thread 6: READ GDC's Interview with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.

Author

24sevenTEAM

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Fri Feb 04, 2005 8:38 am Post subject: READ GDC's Interview with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.

READ GDC's Interview with Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.

http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/ex_interview_pattakos.html

Thread 7: BUY A COPY of PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

Author

24sevenTEAM

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Tue Feb 01, 2005 6:49 am Post subject: BUY A COPY of PRISONERS OF OUR THOUGHTS

BUY A COPY of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* by Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.

Follow along with Alex Pattakos' seven-month series, as he seeds the conversation each month with ONE of the CORE PRINCIPLES drawn from Viktor Frankl's insights for finding meaning and fulfillment in your work and everyday life---achieving your highest potential!

* * * *

Buy a copy of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* from Amazon.com

* * * *

or visit Berrett-Koehler Publishers

ISBN 1576752887

Thread 8: REVIEW: How to Escape Your Own Inner Concentration Camp

Author

24sevenTEAM

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

Message

Posted: Wed Jan 26, 2005 11:49 am Post subject: REVIEW: How to Escape Your Own Inner Concentration Camp

 **Excellent, inspiring overview of Mr. Pattakos' message applied to today's work environment!**

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

REPORT ON BUSINESS - How to escape your 'own inner concentration camp'

By HARVEY SCHACHTER

Global and Mail - Canada

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

Wednesday, January 12, 2005 - Page C8

BOOK:

***Prisoners of Our Thoughts: Viktor Frankl's Principles at Work*
By Alex Pattakos, Ph.D.**

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 187 pages

This year marks the centenary of the birth of Viktor Frankl, the Austrian psychotherapist and concentration camp survivor whose *Man's Search For Meaning* has been declared one of the 10 most influential books of the 20th century.

At a young age, Frankl became convinced it is the human spirit that makes us unique, and

we must each answer the question that life asks about the meaning of our lives.

His experiences in the Nazi prison camps, where he lost his wife, parents, brother and nearly his own life, only deepened that belief in meaning, showing him how the human spirit could find it under the most unimaginable circumstances.

"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," he wrote.

Now, Alex Pattakos, founder of the Center for Personal Meaning in Santa Fe, N.M., who has taught at the University of Toronto, has brought Frankl's work to the attention of the business world in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts: Viktor Frankl's Principles at Work*.

Mr. Pattakos warns that too many of us believe life just happens to us, and that we are relatively powerless to change it. That locks us into a prison of our own thoughts -- what Frankl called our "own inner concentration camp" -- when we could be creating our own reality through the search for meaning.

To unlock our metaphorical prison camp, Mr. Pattakos sets out seven principles drawn from Frankl's work:

We are free to choose our attitude to everything that happens to us. As Nelson Mandela demonstrated with his generosity after being set free from prison, we can -- and are responsible for -- choosing how we react to circumstances we face.

To help gain perspective, Mr. Pattakos recommends listing 10 positive things that could result from the setbacks you face at work, whether the breakdown of a production line, the elimination of your department or losing your job. That helps you see that you can choose how you want to view a situation.

We can realize our will to find meaning by making a conscious commitment to meaningful values and goals. Giving meaning to work means more than seeking money, influence, status or prestige. We must honour our deepest needs by committing to other values and goals.

For instance, he writes, Tom Chappell, founder of Tom's of Maine, has done this by creating a company with a demonstrated social good -- producing toothpastes and toiletries that minimize their environmental damage, putting 10 per cent of pretax profits to community needs in his state and allowing employees to spend 5 per cent of their time on volunteer work.

We can find meaning in all of life's moments. With our sound-bite lifestyle speeding up reality, we must slow down enough to find the meaning in our activities and relationships with others. Mr. Pattakos recommends writing the one-page obituary you would want to see summing up your life, and then figuring out how to live daily by its precepts.

We can learn to see how we work against ourselves. When we are hyper-intent, we work against our own best interests, as when we micro-manage or focus so intently on a problem that we can't see the solution.

We can look at ourselves from a distance and gain insight and perspective, and we can laugh at ourselves. It's vital to seek a sense of self-detachment from our work -- to lighten up, not sweat the small stuff, and gain new understanding.

We can shift our focus of attention when coping with difficult situations. Frankl learned in

the concentration camp to deflect his attention away from painful situations to other, more appealing circumstances; we can try the same technique at work, regaining the natural resilience of childhood by not wallowing in misfortune but, rather, moving on to the next exciting opportunity.

We can reach out beyond ourselves and make a difference in the world. Whenever we go beyond satisfying our own personal needs -- and, instead, serve others -- we enter the realm of what Frankl called "ultimate meaning." We don't have to be a Nelson Mandela or Gandhi, Mr. Pattakos notes, but must pay attention to moments in our daily lives when we can help others, or display forgiveness, generosity, thoughtfulness and understanding to colleagues and friends.

Mr. Pattakos says these seven principles "are available to us any time, all the time. They lead us to meaning, to freedom, and to deep connection to our own lives as well as the lives of others in our local and global communities."

His book is clearly written and well-structured, laced with ample quotations from Frankl. It tackles its philosophical and spiritual ideas in a practical way, with many examples from the working world.