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## **Meaningful Living**

We are happy when we live a meaningful life.

Finding happiness requires that we have the courage and the trust to search for how we can make a difference, where we can experience true joy, and how we can find the strength to deal with suffering.

Finding meaning requires that we have the courage to be authentic, to be who we truly are (like the Gary Larsen cartoon, where the cow asks the therapist “Is it me, or is it the rest of the herd?”)

An ancient Chinese proverb says “If you want to be happy, find something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for.”

Philosopher-psychiatrist Dr. Viktor Frankl asserted that there are three ways by which we can have meaning in our life: creative values, experiential values and attitudinal values.

Frankl said creative values are what we give to the world. Experiential values are what the world gives us through love, beauty, justice. Attitudinal values are realized by the attitude we take when something bad happens to us.

Sometimes we are clear what our life meaning is and we are happy. Other times we are unsure what our meaning is in, and we can feel lost, confused, and sometimes even despairing.

Frankl said it is normal to go through times in our lives when we are unsure of what is meaningful to us. At these times, we need not fear or panic or despair. We just need to take time to listen, to examine our life, and find the new meaning that is emerging for us.

Many people have found this simple meaning worksheet helpful.

1. Creative Value: how I want to use my talents and gifts to make a difference, to make the world a better place

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2. Experiential Value: living deeply, people I love, things I enjoy

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3. Attitudinal Values: attitude we adopt in dealing with unavoidable suffering, like illness, death, loss

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