



Meaningful Minute



New Meaning



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Finding and Discovering Meanings

As a human being you respond to a natural call to find or discover meanings

This is the third in a series of eight connected Meaningful Minutes that you can choose to experiment with to create your own model for finding and shaping personal meaning within your life.

If you followed the exercise in the second Meaningful Minute, you will have described your past memorable events as you recall them today. This exercise connects you with the past event and can also generate a significant volume of information. In finding or discovering the meanings behind the event or experience, you are finding the essence of what the experience meant to you. What continues to connect you to any given event. Or what enduring impact the event has had on your beliefs, morals, truths, values and attitudes.

Meanings can be defined as a series of plots to a story. The plots unfold chapter by chapter as you unfold the event you experienced. If another person was to read your account of your experience, what meaning would you hope they would find: enduring courage, the triumph of good over evil, an ordinary life lived to the full, a commitment beyond the call of duty, a conviction to stay steady to your values?

I encourage you to view your ability to find meanings, as a natural process. The enduring impacts or connections are felt as much as thought – you are giving a voice to what you feel. The meanings you find will be influenced in part by the facts as you remember them, in part by what you create (often termed beliefs or values) and in part by your attitude now to what you experienced. Finding and discovering meanings is a process of making sense of the world you live in. We cannot carry around detailed descriptions of every event we experience; hence we find and discover meanings.

When completing the following exercise, it may help you to reflect on the following words: you are unique in terms of your essence and experience, you cannot be replaced and the meanings you find will fit the experiences you have encountered. What you find is uniquely yours.

“You cannot arbitrarily give meaning, only find it for yourself.”

Viktor Frankl



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Finding Meanings of Powerful Life Events

The objective of this exercise is to discover the enduring meanings of the events or encounters you have experienced in your life thus far. You described these experiences in the second Meaningful Minute, and this exercise helps you connect with the enduring impact of each of these experiences.

Finding or discovering meanings is not about right or wrong. This exercise is about you identifying how the events of your past impact you today. It may help to start with a positive event, or only focus on events that you feel comfortable or able to work with. Go with what feels right for you at any given point in time.

To complete the exercise, work through the following steps:

- Find a comfortable place to sit, with no interruptions (unless you have chosen to work with a friend)
- Read through the descriptions you created in the last Meaningful Minute exercise
- Take 10 minutes to reflect on the event or experience in its entirety, and using the descriptions
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - How do I feel I connect with the event today?
 - What enduring impact did the event have on my life?
 - How do I make sense of my past experience or encounter today?
 - How would I outline the essence of the experience to a friend?
 - What attitude do I choose to the event today?

It is entirely up to you whether you complete this exercise on your own, or with a friend. Whether you scan and describe a number of events, or whether you focus on one or two. Give yourself time; a little, often, might work better than full immersion. Go well and steady.