



Meaningful Minute



New Meaning



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Describing Behaviours, Thoughts and Feelings

What we are, we have become; for we are the product of our experiences

This is the second 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.

You can discover the rich meanings connected to the events, encounters or experiences that have shaped your life, through the act of describing. To describe an event is in part to re-live an experience as you remember it today. To bring a past event into your conscious mind, to re-engage with what you thought and felt, can be a challenge. Not only of your memory but also of your conviction. You might not choose with certainty to re-live, in a physical sense, every experience you have had throughout your life. Yet all your experiences have had an impact on how you see, feel and hear your world. How you make sense of the world you live in. Your purpose in re-living an event through describing it is to start to connect with what it means to you today. To understand the impact of the unique meanings that you shaped in the past, and to determine their impact on your life today.

The act of describing your past events can also bring a reflective sense of satisfaction. You achieved something, you made it through a tough challenge, your story is full and rich. You are unique because of your physical form, and also because of the experiences you have had. There is no such thing as an ordinary life. All lives are rich with meaning.

In undertaking this exercise it may help to remember these words written by Viktor Frankl, a man who faced and survived the concentration camps of World War II:

- “Finding meaning is not a gift, but an achievement. The achievement may be the greatest when meaning is obscure, as in situations of unavoidable suffering. Nobody knows [their] limits until Life offers [them] the opportunity to test them.”

“We can be at one and the same time half-sure and whole-hearted”

Gordon Allport



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Describing Powerful Life Events

The objective of this exercise is to describe the most-memorable events or encounters you have experienced in your life thus far. You recalled these experiences in the first Meaningful Minute, and this exercise takes you one step closer to finding their meaning. There is no right or wrong way to describe your past life events – only your way. Start with a positive event, and only focus on events that you feel comfortable or able to work with. The depth you go to in your description is your choice – go with what feels right for you at any given point in time.

There are a number of methods you can use to describe any given event:

- **Visual** – you could use a large sheet of paper and describe the event by drawing it. Your drawing could use symbols, or pictures you cut out of a newspaper or magazine, or both.
- **Auditory** – you could work with a friend and take turns describing the event using words. If you use this method then agree that for the first 5 to 10 minutes, you will listen and reserve your questions.
- **Kinaesthetic** – you could use modelling or building blocks to bring the event to life. This form of learning is often called ‘thinking and feeling through doing’. You describe the symbolism of the event.

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.

In describing the event, use the following questions as a guide:

- What behaviours do I remember, and what were the facts of the experience
- What do I remember thinking, and what do I think now
- What do I remember feeling, and what do I feel now.

Give yourself time; a little, often, might work better than full immersion. Go well and steady.