

## Logotherapy: A Means of Finding Meaning to Life

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### Abstract

The term logotherapy is derived from the Greek word 'logos' denoting meaning. Viktor Emil Frankl[1] is popularly known as the father of logotherapy. Logotherapy attempts to empower clients to find meaning in work, love, suffering, and creation. It focuses on the future, on the meanings to be fulfilled in the future. It is a psychotherapeutic approach which is based on the belief that emotional equilibrium can be achieved through seeking meaning or purpose in life. The meaning in life is not invented but has to be discovered. One can give meaning to one's life by realising creative, experiential or attitudinal values. Basis of logotherapy is based on three paradigms namely freedom of will, will to meaning and meaning in life. The basic techniques used by the logotherapist are paradoxical intention, dereflection and socratic dialogue. This therapy is found useful in treating clients suffering from psychosomatic illness, anxiety, depression, neurosis, childhood disorders, post traumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideations. Nurses role here is to educate the clients in achieving an optimistic attitude towards life and also enabling the client to understand life's transitions as well as overcoming crisis situations at the earliest thereby promoting mental health.

**Keywords:** Logotherapy; Paradoxical intention; Dereflection; Transitoriness; Experiential values.

### Introduction

The art of living involves introspection with self-seeking solutions to questions affecting mankind like: What is the goal of living? What is life's meaning for man? Thus, developing an optimistic view of life and leading a productive life. Individuals in contemporary society are, more than ever experiencing lack of meaning in their lives and an attendant sense of desolation.

Viktor Emil Frankl is popularly known as the father of logotherapy.[1] The term logotherapy is based on the Greek word 'logos' denoting meaning. Logotherapy attempts to empower clients to find meaning in work, love, suffering, and creation. His logotherapy ascertains that life has meaning in suffering and that human beings' main motivation is to create meaning. According to Reichenberg & Seligman the creation of meaning and purpose is an attempt to deal with the four existential concerns of death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness.[2] According to Viktor Frankl death is a primary concern because it is inevitable and inescapable.[1] Freedom is an existential concern because, according to Frankl, it insinuates that there is no master plan to the universe; therefore, each person is responsible for creating who he or she is and what he or she does in life.[1], Isolation is a particularly vexing existential concern, as it makes salient the phenomenological reality that there is a gulf that exists between us and others, as well as within ourselves.[2] The final existential concern is meaninglessness; wherefore, we

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must create meaning in an utterly meaningless or detachment. existence.[1]

*Principles of Logotherapy*

Logotherapy is based on three triads.[1] The first consists of freedom to will, the will to freedom and meaning of life. The latter-the meaning of life, encapsulates the second triad which consists of creative, experiential and attitudinal values.

*1. The First Triad*

*i) Freedom of Will*

An individual has freedom of will despite his consequences. The ultimate freedom of will then is, the freedom to choose one's attitude from the circumstances. Such freedom is made possible by human capacity of self distancing

*ii) Will to Meaning*

The will to meaning is seen as individual's primary motivation in life. Man is searching out for meaning in his life, always setting out on his meaning in his life.

*iii) Meaning of Life*

Every individual's search for meaning being personal and unique, situations do exist that are sufficiently similar to evoke similar responses from different individuals. Thus values (for example power, benevolence, autonomy and personal achievement) involve people finding certain universal meanings in certain situations.

**Figure 1: The Triads Underlying Logotherapy**

