

## *Cultivating Greater Meaning and Purpose to Prevent Relapse*

Presenter: Garret Biss, CAPP, MRED

### **Does logotherapy include living in the moment and to what degree does the past hold a role in logotherapy?**

A: I touched on briefly the three ways that Logotherapy recognizes we can discover meaning in life. One way, “by experiencing something or encountering someone. This pathway is expressly in the moment. Another point to consider is that whether or not something has meaning -- either an experience in the past, something in the present or a future manifestation of a current deed -- it is a judgment that is made in the present. Something in the past may not have given a sense of meaning in the past and when an ambition is realized in the future, it may no longer have meaning, but in the moment is where that determination of meaning lives.

### **Negative messages, based on my own image of myself, contributed to over four decades of my own addiction. How does meaning and purpose depend on the truth (rather than perceptions) that is within an addict?**

A: I would say that in matter of meaning and purpose, one’s truth is their perspective. The nutritional facts of a specific apple and the number of grams of sugar it contains could be defined with objective truth. However, whether the apple is sweet or satisfying is more subjective to one’s perspective. To one person, it is very sweet. To another, mildly so, and another, slightly bitter. These “truths” are subjective to the individual (and really to the time they make the judgment). This area of subjective truth born from perception is where meaning and purpose are found. Each person will determine if something has meaning in their life based on their own truth at that moment. For one, an experience may have tremendous meaning. For another, no meaning at all. Yet for that second person, that same experience, considered in hindsight, may someday come to bear significant meaning,

### **How do you incorporate mindfulness into this approach (if you do at all)?**

A: Establishing an appreciating a sense of meaning is something that requires awareness of self and the circumstances surrounding self. I don’t know that mindfulness is incorporated *into* logotherapy but rather that an element of mindfulness promotes the ability to experience meaning.

### **Which of Victor Frankel's books would you recommend we read to learn more about Logotherapy?**

A: If you want to read a biographical account of his time in a concentration camp, *A Man’s For Meaning*, is a great book that concludes with an introduction to Will to Meaning. If you’d rather an academic book about Logotherapy and applications of it, *The Will to Meaning*. A book I really enjoyed compiles 16 different lectures about Meaning-Centered Approach to Addiction Recovery by different presenters. This book is a great way to be exposed to different perspectives and applications of The Will to Meaning that are specific to addiction. It’s called, *The Positive Psychology of Meaning and Addiction*. (See bibliography slide in presentation for full details)

### **Proposals/efforts to change behaviors stop at the door of related complexities. The adamant declarations that "we are social beings" evaporate in the face of behavior changes. What source/s are available regarding these sophistications? As clients shift in these regards, what sources are available to assist them?**

A: As the discovery of meaning is something that is found in the moment and subjective to an individual’s perspective in that moment, I don’t surmise that any client shifts would diminish the efficacy of logotherapy. The establishment of a sense of meaning in one moment is not carried into the next, a sense of meaning, whether through work or deed, experience or encounter, or attitude toward suffering, it must be founded on the observations of each moment. Since the applications of logotherapy are efficacious to most, a client shift would not negate logotherapy’s methods from helping that client in the new moment, albeit maybe in a different way.

### **Would you say that some of this work has a Lot to do with ontology?**

A: If you mean in the sense that the nature of a thing depends upon the perspective from which it is viewed then yes, I would say that meaning itself is ontological. By its nature, a will to meaning is an individual pursuit and where that sense of meaning is derived depends on the individual's perspective. Two people can experience a similar tragedy or engage in the same work at present. Yet, for only one of them was the past experience suffering, for the other it was a blessing; for one their profession is dreadful, for the other it is exhilarating. It depends on the perspective.

**How could this be used, or could this be used as a part of MAT group?**

A: A meaning-centered treatment approach to addiction or recovery is not intended to be exclusive of any other aspects of treatment – MAT or non-MAT. Logotherapy looks to solve the issue of existential crises that many find are the root of the pain that led to addictive behavior. I have not read anything that specifically discusses the effects or considerations for logotherapy with patients who are in an MAT program so I don't have anything specific to point you toward. However, I haven't read anything that suggests the efficacy of a meaning-centered approach would be diminished for helping those who are in an MAT program.