

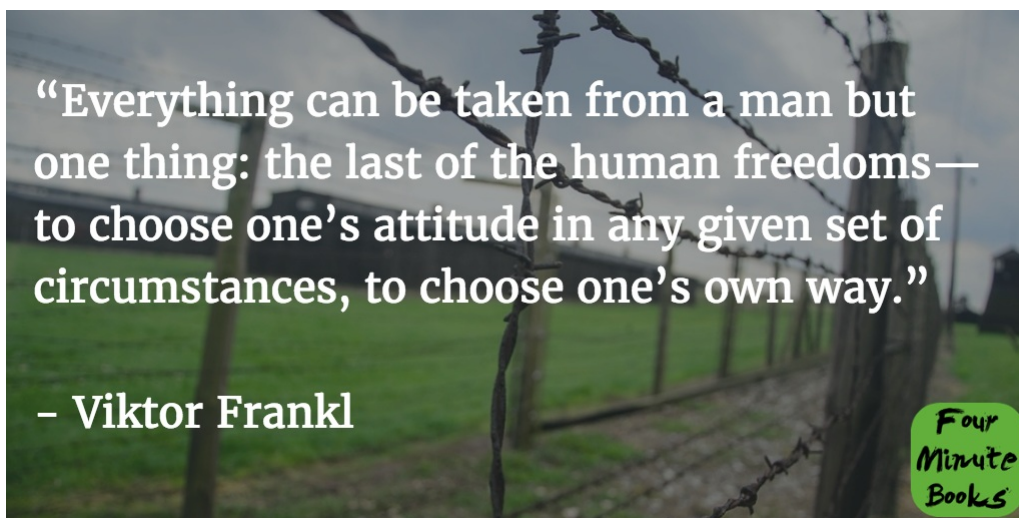
Man's Search For Meaning Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Man's Search For Meaning* details holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's horrifying experiences in Nazi concentration camps, along with his psychological approach of logotherapy, which is also what helped him survive and shows you how you can – and must – find meaning in your life.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I don't think any combination of words can paint a picture gruesome enough to describe what existing (note the difference to "living") inside a Nazi concentration camp must have been like.

Viktor Frankl was one of the few, who survived in a place, where your chances of dying are higher than those of living on any given day. After three years in various concentration camps, his camp Türkheim was liberated, upon which he returned to Vienna, where he was born.

Frankl spent the rest of his life teaching what he'd learned during the worst of times: that people can, and must, find meaning in their lives, even if all they know is tremendous suffering. It is called logotherapy and has made him one of the key figures of modern psychology.

Here are 3 lessons from his world-famous 1946 book, *Man's Search For Meaning*:

1. Sometimes the only way to survive is to surrender to death.
2. Your life has its own meaning and it's up to you to find it in any given moment.
3. Use paradoxical intention to make your fears go away.

Are you ready for some of the toughest lessons anyone has ever had to learn? Let's show Viktor Frankl some respect by learning from him.

Lesson 1: Being indifferent to death allowed people to survive.

Frankl said all concentration camp prisoners went through the several phases after arriving at the camp. This one is what made him and some of his surviving peers different from those, who perished, and it's quite paradoxical.

In order to survive, you had to be okay with dying any moment.

This sort of indifference to death, the perspective of merely existing, not living, allowed prisoners to shield their minds from the terrors around them and do what was necessary to survive.

All of the things we take for granted today were severely limited in the concentration camps: food, clothing, sleep, rest. By surrendering to the present and not spending one second thinking of the future, prisoners summoned the apathy they needed to, for example, grab a vital pair of shoes from a dead body or hide in a pile of manure to avoid being led to the gas chambers.

Sometimes, the only way to survive is to surrender to dying.

Lesson 2: Your life has its own meaning and it's up to you to find it in any given moment.

If you ask any great chess player what the best move in chess is, they'll just stare at you with a puzzled face. There is no such thing. There *is*, however, a best move in any particular constellation of pieces on the board. Of course there's a best move in any game situation, but no general move beats all others.

The meaning of your life is the same way.

There's no general meaning of life and not even one, singular meaning of your own life. Your life's meaning is not only unique to you, it also depends on your decisions and situations.

This is what logotherapy claims and it flips the common misconception that you have to find your life's meaning first, before you're able to live your best life, upside down.

Instead, how you act, and **how much responsibility you bring to the decisions you make determines how big your sense of meaning in life is.**

For example, Frankl found meaning when stumbling through the night, barefoot, across icy rocks and through big puddles, forced to work by the Nazi guards, simply by thinking of his wife, imagining her face up in the clouds and finding bliss in this moment of love.

Lesson 3: Try to force your fears to come true to make them go away.

Another thing logotherapy does is enable people by focusing on their internal state of mind, instead of external factors, thus giving them a sense of control over their own life.

For example, if you're afraid of sometimes stuttering in front of your friends, it might seem like your environment (i.e. your friends being there) is what's at fault.

But by using something Frankl calls *paradoxical intention*, you can turn this around and take control. In reality, you only start stuttering, because you're afraid you'll start stuttering. Paradoxical intention flips this around by getting you to **try and force your fears to come true**.

In this example, you should do exactly what you're afraid of, and try to stutter as much as possible when you're around your friends.

You'll notice that, as soon as you try to force it to happen, it won't work, and eventually lose your fear of stuttering in front of your friends altogether.

Man's Search For Meaning Review

Man's Search For Meaning is about more than just reading or learning something new. It's about respect. I don't think there's any way my generation (millennials) can make amends or pay dues for what previous generations have done. It's not our job either.

But there's still that feeling of having to take responsibility for the course of history by learning as much about it as we can and showing our respect to those, who shaped it.

Maybe it's because I'm German, but I really think everyone should read this. Also, [this short video](#) is a great start to learn more about Viktor Frankl and his work.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- How most people responded with delusion upon camp arrival
 - Why liberation from the camps didn't really set anyone free
 - How turning inward saved prisoners from dealing too much with reality
 - What made deciding, whenever you had a small chance to, crucial to survival
 - Why meaning is the biggest motivator of our lives
 - What an existential vacuum is and how to avoid it

Who would I recommend the Man's Search For Meaning summary to?

The 16 year old, who's just starting to learn about World War II in school, the 30 year old, who's on his fourth job, desperate to finally discover his life's meaning, so he can build a real career, and anyone who's afraid of being embarrassed in public for small mistakes.