

Finding Meaning

“Everything can be taken from a man, but one thing, the last of the human freedoms.

To choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Victor Frankl

As human beings, we are constantly changing, no matter our age, situation, family or environment, human beings are not fixed. Different experiences, challenges, difficulties, happy times and sad times contribute to our growth, contributes to us changing and recreating ourselves. We grow and make progress through each of our experiences. When an illness such as this affects us, we have the freedom to choose our actions and our attitude despite the circumstances.

Making meaning from change

When we have a purpose in our lives, we can answer the question “how did this happen to me?”

Realising you have been infected, may come as a shock to you. You may be faced with questions about how it happened, why it happened to you, and may face blaming yourself, or blaming others around you for having passed it on. Most importantly you are faced with the change that

occurs in your life for the next 2-3 weeks. This change will impact your relationships with family, your environment, your finances, your work, your physical and mental health and your overall well-being.

The ability to adapt and accept change, even when faced with difficulties show the true resilience which a person has. Accepting the change is going to be tough, very tough but you need to trust yourself, and realise that the freedom to live the next few weeks in the best possible way, despite the circumstances is still in your hands. You are not completely powerless in this situation. Start to think about how you can find meaning – finding the benefits of having this illness, and finding the positives about being afflicted with this illness. Some people might find meaning by considering how it can bring you closer to your creator, others may find meaning in having time to complete work, time to relax, or even time to just be by yourself. Use the time for self-reflection, use this time to create a new purpose for your life, use the time to develop goals, or to create change in yourself or your life.

Remember to always trust yourself to make effective choices, you are the only one who can create a new path from a difficult situation.

This will to find meaning will bring hope during your suffering, and allows you to believe in a positive outcome despite what predictions may be.

“When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.”

Victor Frankl

Death

“Even when facing death, I should continue behaving and acting as if I would be saved from this fate, for there is no guarantee of when it may occur”.

No matter what we are faced with, even if we know that our time is coming to an end, we will never know for sure when this might happen. We can choose to lose hope, put ourselves in a position of despair, and allow ourselves to not be living fully while we wait for our time to be up, or we can choose to live as though we are alive. Making this choice would allow us to have hope, to continue to be positive no matter what others predict.

Facing death or the possibility of death is a fact which we will be forced to acknowledge if we are infected. We may have heard of or know someone who has died due to the illness. Covid-19 is an illness which makes us face this reality but facing the possibility of death need not be a negative

thing. In order for us to live fully, to see the importance of being alive, we must be able to think about death. If we think our lives are neverending, we are unable to realise the beauty of life.

Death gives us the motivation to live fully, to ensure that every moment of time becomes a moment which we live, and live it to the best of our ability.

This is your choice – your choice in how you would like to spend each moment of your weeks in isolation. Use this time to focus on the best way that you would spend each moment if you knew it was your last. Remember that most people recover from this illness but there being no guarantee doesn't mean we should feel sad, but rather give us the opportunity to make the most of each minute which passes by.

Ways to create meaning:

- Evaluate what is important to you and the reasons why it is so important to you.
- Use a gratitude journal to write down daily blessings, no matter how small, as this may

assist you in adding new meaning to things or people in your life.

- Explore what gives you hope. Although you may grieve for your losses and experience a sense of hopelessness, it is important to make an effort to try and find at least one thing that can bring hope and motivate you to take a step forward.
- Set daily goals, because it will help you focus on what you need and still can do, and will also reduce anxiety. Having a sense of what needs to be done for the day and being able to comply will provide a feeling of accomplishment.
- Engage in meaningful and positive conversations. Social distancing does not imply social withdrawal. This implies that we can still make an effort to try and stay in contact with significant others.
- Practice mindfulness in daily activities. We are so used to the rush of having to meet all our deadlines and to get everything done, that mindfulness almost “forces” us to take a deep breath, to focus our attention and all our senses on one thing at a time to fully enjoy it in the present moment. This enables you to ground yourself in an attempt to adapt to challenges.

Despite the uncertainty of our current circumstances, it is important that we take care of our mental health as well.

“Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation” Victor Frankl