

Applied Positive Psychology

Professor Dilwar Hussain

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Week 7

Lecture 22: Meaning-oriented interventions

I welcome you all to Module 7 of the course, titled "Applied Positive Psychology." So, module seven is about meaning and purpose in life. Today's lecture is lecture number 19, where we discuss meaning-oriented interventions. This is the second lecture of this module and the nineteenth lecture overall. Before we discuss today's lecture, let me provide a brief recap of the previous one. So, the last lecture was also part of the same module. In that lecture, we explored the fundamental concepts surrounding the concept of meaning in life. So, we discuss what the meaning of life is. We tried to define it and also tried to understand the dimensions of meaning in life. We discussed three core dimensions of meaning in life. We also strive to understand the connection between meaning in life and well-being. Meaning in life influences various aspects of well-being, which we discussed in the last lecture. Today's lecture will build on this and discuss how we can utilize the concept of meaning in life, primarily in terms of its applications and interventions. So, today's lecture will focus on these concepts.

One is that we will discuss what makes life meaningful. Various components enhance the meaning in our lives. We will then discuss how to discover meaning in our lives from the perspective of logotherapy, and we will attempt to understand and apply some of its concepts in the pursuit of finding meaning in life. So, these will be the focus of today's lecture.

Let's begin today's lecture. When discussing meaning in life, we have already explored the various dimensions of meaning. One was coherence, the second was the matter of significance, and the third was purpose. We also strive to comprehend the importance of all three dimensions. In the last lecture, we discussed the different aspects associated with it. Today, we will examine the various factors that contribute to the meaning of life in more detail. So, if these variables are present in your life, you will most likely have more meaning in your life. Therefore, we will examine various variables that research has identified as having a significant influence on the meaning in our lives.

In that context, we'll discuss six such variables- positive affect, social connections, religion

and worldviews, self, awareness of mortality, and, lastly, mental time travel. These are the six concepts that we'll try to understand as variables and how they are linked to meaning in life, and how they can actually facilitate meaning in our lives.

Let's discuss each of them separately. The first one is positive affect, which, in a broader sense, refers to positive emotions. The relationship between positive emotions or affect and meaning in life is well established in empirical research, with early assessments linking meaning strongly to feelings of enjoyment and pleasure. Research has shown that higher levels of positive emotions contribute to a greater sense of meaning in one's life. Now, positive effects or emotions like happiness, cheerfulness, and fun emerge as a robust, though debated, antecedent of meaning in life. A significant amount of research actually shows that these are potent predictors of meaning in life. The presence of happiness, cheerfulness, and fun in one's life actually enhances meaning in life. Studies show that happiness ranks highly among sources of meaning, second only to family members. Some research suggests that the concept of happiness is closely related to the meaning of life. It is one of the highest-ranked variables that contribute to meaning in one's life.

Now, let us examine some of the specific empirical evidence that is available. One is in terms of correlation with a positive affect. Positive affects consistently predict a sense of meaning in life across studies. Numerous studies have shown that a significant portion of research demonstrates that positive emotions consistently predict meaning in one's life across various studies. It is not just one or two studies. Multiple studies have shown that. There is a strong correlation between positive effects and a sense of meaning in life. Apart from correlational studies, experimental studies have also shown that positive mood inductions, such as listening to happy music or recalling positive memories, enhance perceived meaning in one's life. So even through experimental studies, when positive emotions were manipulated or induced artificially, such as by listening to good music or recalling positive memories, and so on. Such temporary inductions of positive emotion also enhance perceived meaning in one's life.

Apart from correlational studies, experimental studies, and daily experiences, diary studies have also shown that daily positive mood is a stronger predictor of retrospective meaning in life than daily ratings of meaning itself. Even diary studies show that the report of a positive mood in day-to-day life was actually a powerful predictor of meaning in life when examined retrospectively. So, all kinds of studies—cross-sectional, experimental, as well as diary studies—have actually shown that positive emotions have a powerful connection with meaning in life. Some studies have also demonstrated the moderating effects of positive mood. It uniquely predicted meaning, even after accounting for variables such as religiosity, self-esteem, social belongingness, and others; however, these variables moderated the relationship, with individuals low on these dimensions finding meaning primarily through positive mood. These variables, such as religiosity, self-esteem, and

social belonging, predict or significantly contribute to positivity and meaning in one's life. However, even after controlling for all these variables, positive mood remains a unique predictor of meaning, even after taking into account all these variables. Research also shows that individuals who are low on these variables tend to find meaning primarily through positive emotions. So even if these variables are not present in one's life, people are more likely to find meaning in positive emotions. So, even if you control all these variables, positive emotion still predicts meaning in life, even if these variables are not present in one's life or are present to a lesser extent. What is the broader implication of this variable? When we discuss positive emotions, they are typically part of hedonic well-being.

Meaning in life, on the other hand, is an aspect of eudaimonic well-being. Now, these are two distinct aspects of well-being, but research indicates that they can also contribute to one another. So, this is something interesting. In terms of philosophical debates, hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being have long been discussed separately, and individuals who support one school of thought generally tend not to favor the other. However, this research on positive emotions and meaning in life clearly demonstrates that one aspect of well-being can influence the various elements of well-being, particularly in the context of hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. The positive effect's role in meaning challenges the traditional dichotomy between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, although conceptually, they are distinct aspects of well-being that can have a strong influence on each other. While the positive effect is central to hedonic well-being, its substantial contribution to the meaning in life, which is an essential aspect of eudaimonic well-being, suggests that these domains are more interconnected than previously thought. So, this domain is actually very strongly connected, you know, as compared to what was previously thought in the research literature. Historical perspectives, such as those of William James and Yalom, also emphasize the profound role of positive emotions in fostering meaning, reinforcing their importance as a central aspect of life's meaning. Which basically means that even historically, some great philosophers such as William James and Yalom. Additionally, it is crucial to highlight the role of positive emotions in cultivating meaning in one's life. This clearly demonstrates that the various facets of well-being, or different dimensions of well-being, may be interconnected with one another. So, this is one aspect of the source of meaning. The more we experience positive emotions in our lives, the more likely we are to perceive positive meaning in life, or to find meaning in the various things we do.

Therefore, positive emotions may contribute to or facilitate the experience of meaning in one's life. One thing to note is that if you want to increase meaning in your life, one pathway is through enhancing positive emotions. The following variable that can contribute to meaning in one's life is social connections. Let us examine how social connection is related to the meaning in one's life. The influence of social relationships on the meaning of life is undeniable, as many aspects of our lives make them meaningful; we find meaning in the

things we do and the people we interact with. One of the reasons is that the connections we have with other people also play a vital role in terms of giving meaning to our lives. Our lives are often made meaningful by the loved ones around us. Therefore, social connection plays a crucial role. As inherently social animals, humans are motivated to form secure bonds. Social instinct propels us to connect with other people and derive psychological well-being when this need is met. When we can connect with others meaningfully, it actually fulfills one of our most basic needs: the need to communicate with others.

Conversely, social isolation often leads to adverse outcomes such as depression, among others. So, there is already substantial research evidence that shows the role of social connections and support systems on well-being, and a lack of them leads to a lack of well-being in terms of depression and so on. Now, how do social relationships contribute to meaning in one's life? So, suppose you look at the facets of meaning. In that case, social relationships actually contribute to all three dimensions of meaning in life—all these dimensions we discussed elaborately in the last lecture. In terms of finding coherence in one's life, organizing experiences, and discovering purpose, it lends significance to our lives, making us valuable individuals. One of the reasons is that the people around us, or our loved ones, make us feel that we are helpful in life. Thus, all three dimensions of coherence, significance, and purpose in life can be positively influenced by social connections or relationships with others. Meaning often arises from interdependence and generativity, such as parenting, caregiving, and contributing positively to others. These roles clarify the purpose and create a sense of impact. All behaviors related to understanding social relationships, such as parenting, caregiving, and contributing positively to others, contribute to giving us a greater sense of meaning in our lives.

Close relationships also help us restore meaning during difficult times by enabling individuals to share stories, reappraise situations positively, and develop broader self-understanding. When we face difficulties, traumatic situations, or adversities in our lives, this close relationship helps us restore meaning during challenging times because we can share our stories with others. We can look at the situation differently because other people contribute to our perspective on the same situation in various ways. It helps us develop a broader understanding, self-awareness, and insight into different situations, among other things. So, it restores meaning, especially in the complex and challenging situations of our lives, where meaning becomes disrupted. The people close to us actually help us fix that meaning system. This is a significant aspect, one of the mechanisms by which this can contribute to meaning in our lives.

Now, let's examine some empirical findings. Social belonging, the sense of social belonging, and how it contributes to meaning. Research indicates that positive social interactions, including feelings of belonging and social support, consistently predict a sense of meaning in life, even after accounting for other factors. This research demonstrates that

social connections play a significant role in contributing to an understanding of meaning in life. This remains true even after controlling for numerous other variables that could contribute to a sense of meaning in life. This can uniquely predict perceived impact. Additionally, research indicates that the perception of social relationships, relatedness, and any social support uniquely predicts meaning in life. Even perception plays a role in determining meaning in life, emphasizing the importance of feeling connected and making a positive impact on others.

So, there can also be a perceived impact. Research also shows that interventions that enhance feelings of belonging increase the belief that life is meaningful. Even in certain intervention studies where people were made to realize that their sense of belonging was increased or manipulated, studies show that it contributes to a higher sense of meaning in their lives, and so on. Even from a lay perspective, people commonly report that social relationships are a primary source of meaning in their lives. Even if you ask anyone, they will say that they perceive their life as meaningful. One of the reasons is that, due to the people around them, their loved ones, and the social support they receive, other people make them realize that they are valuable and so forth. All of this contributes to the meaning of one's life. This is another source of meaning in life: social connection. Therefore, if you have more meaningful social relationships and a healthier support system, this could also be one of the essential or significant sources of meaning in your life. This is another pathway through which we can enhance the meaning in our lives by building meaningful relationships with others. So, this is the second important variable.

The third distinction is between religious and non-religious worldviews. What kind of belief system do we have in our lives? It could be spiritual or non-religious beliefs. They also contribute to meaning in our lives. They help us make sense of the world around us. What happens to us? What is the meaning of this life? What should we do? What are the right things to do in our lives? What happens after death, and so on? All these things are actually interpreted through various worldviews. Some of these worldviews are religious, some may be secular or non-religious in nature. Let us examine this aspect: how these worldviews actually contribute to meaning in our lives. Worldviews are essentially overarching belief systems that encompass the various kinds of beliefs we hold about different aspects of our lives, including ourselves, others, the world, the afterlife, and so on. All these belief systems help individuals interpret experiences, set goals, and define their place in the universe. We have always tried to make sense of our existence. This world encompasses various perspectives that we acquire through socialization, religious teachings, reading books, and other means. All this helps us make sense of our existence, so these are collectively referred to as worldviews. An overarching belief system that enables us to interpret the world around us and our experiences. So, these structures often provide a sense of coherence and purpose. This worldview gives us a sense of coherence.

It helps us make sense of events in our lives. It provides us with an explanation for why such a sudden event occurs in our lives. It also gives us a sense of purpose in our lives.

Many of these ideas and religious belief systems guide us in determining the kind of actions we should take and the kind of goals we should pursue, providing a sense of direction and purpose. Both religious and non-religious worldviews provide a framework for understanding life's purpose, morality, and ultimate meaning. Let us examine both religious and non-religious worldviews and how they contribute to meaning in our lives. Let's examine the various worldviews of different religions. Religion and religious faith are crucial sources of meaning in people's lives, particularly for those who adhere to specific religions and observe them diligently. So religion offers answers to most of the fundamental questions of our existence. It connects individuals to a larger context and gives finite existence infinite meanings. Religions provide answers to many basic questions of life. Why do we exist? What is birth? What is death? And what happens after death? What is the purpose of this life? Religions provide a lot of answers, and people follow them. But when they believe in them, it gives a sense of meaning to their life.

They get answers to questions and follow specific pathways, which provide structure to their lives and minds. Ultimately, we can say that this adds meaning to their lives. Now, religious worldviews enhance all facets of meaning. Whatever the dimension we talked about, it provides comprehension or helps us make sense of the world. It can help us make sense of suffering and mortality, including why people suffer, why some people receive good things, why people die, and what happens after death. All these religious worldviews help us make sense of the world. It helps us comprehend the world. It also gives us a sense of purpose. It helps us establish a clear life direction and identity. All religions provide us with a view of what an ideal life is, what a good life entails, and the pathways and practices we should follow to achieve that perfect life or specific end goals.

Religions offer us numerous life goals and pathways to achieve them. So that gives us a sense of purpose and direction in life. The third dimension is coherence, which encompasses coherence and significance in one's life, among other aspects. So, it makes our lives more meaningful when we feel that we are following a purpose and moving in a specific direction. It gives us a sense of the significance of our lives and our values, making us feel that our lives are worthwhile. All these dimensions of meaning in life are enhanced through religious worldviews, and so on. Some evidence from empirical literature suggests that religiosity has numerous positive impacts on the meaning of life. Religiosity correlates positively with meaning in life across different age groups and cultural contexts, even in contexts where religion is less normative. Research across different cultures and age groups indicates that religious worldviews significantly contribute to people's sense of meaning in life. So, meaning in life mediates the link between religiosity and other aspects of well-being.

As you know, religiosity or religious beliefs often contribute to one's well-being in life, according to a significant amount of research. One of the mechanisms by which religiosity may contribute to well-being is through its moderating effect on the meaning in life. Therefore, religiosity enhances the meaning of life, which in turn leads to higher well-being, and so on. Many religions teach that life's meaning comes from a higher power, a divine purpose, and a sacred duty. For example, a Christian may find deep meaning in life through faith in God, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and serving humanity, among other things. Therefore, if someone is a believer in Christianity, they will find meaning through the various worldviews that Christianity offers as a religion. Now, following the teachings of God, as exemplified by Jesus Christ, people will already have specific pathways defined for them that they can follow and find meaning through. So, this is how it can contribute to meaning in one's life now. Not only religious worldviews, but also non-religious worldviews, can contribute to one's sense of meaning in life. Many worldviews may not have any connection with religion, divine power, or God, and so on. Many worldviews are very secular in their nature. Non-religious worldviews can also help people create meaning in life by offering frameworks.

When you believe in worldviews, which may not be related to religion but help you structure your ideas, they may give you a specific framework, certain philosophies, and certain practices that support purpose, values, and personal fulfillment without relying on belief in God, a deity, or organized religion. Religion encompasses all these worldviews, and when discussing non-religious worldviews, they are primarily related to human experience, reasoning, ethics, societal progress, and other aspects of life. All these non-religious ideas also contribute to meaning in life because they provide structure, help you understand, and make sense of events, among other benefits. The ideas related to humanism are a very non-religious worldview. It has nothing to do with religion. The fundamental concept of humanism philosophy centers on human values, reason, and the potential for human growth. Humanism, as an idea, focuses on human values, nurturing them, emphasizing reason and rational aspects, and promoting the development of humanity. So it supports purpose through relationships, caring for others, building communities, and working towards a better world. These are worldviews that specific nonreligious frameworks can provide. Second is ethical living: doing good for its own sake, not for divine reward or punishment. One should lead a moral life not because of fear of retribution from God and so on. Simply because it is a good way of living, one should follow it, not out of fear of punishment or reward.

Personal development means learning, creativity, and self-improvement. These examples illustrate some of the core ideas of humanism in worldviews. Many people believe in these worldviews and structure their lives around these ideas. For example, a humanist might find meaning through volunteering, advocating for social justice, or mentoring others.

Somebody who believes in such humanistic ideas may volunteer to help many people or advocate for justice for those facing injustice. They may mentor others and provide support because these ideas are closely related to the core principles of humanism. Many people believe in them. They have nothing to do with religious ideas and so on. So, this is an example of how non-religious worldviews can contribute to meaning. So, this is the third variable that could contribute to meaning in one's life. So that's through worldviews. We all try to make sense of our existence, and sometimes we draw upon various religious and non-religious worldviews. The use of such worldviews contributes to the meaning of life. The fourth variable that can facilitate meaning in one's life is the concept of the self, specifically the connection with one's own self-concept.

Now, self-understanding can provide purpose in one's life. Therefore, a strong connection to oneself is established. The more you understand about yourself, your authentic self, the more you will come to understand who you truly are as a person. It can provide a sense of purpose and direction in one's life because you know who you are at the core of your being, what your values are, and what your strengths and weaknesses are. More self-awareness can provide a sense of purpose and direction in one's life, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of one's own meaning. Autobiographical memories related to one's life and the various episodes that comprise them play a crucial role in helping individuals find meaning in their lives. Whatever autobiographical memory we have about ourselves, how do you see yourself? How do you explain yourself? These memories actually play a crucial role in finding meaning in one's life, as they integrate life events into a broader self-narrative supporting coherence and purpose. So, all these ideas about yourself - how do you define who you are, or who I am? All these ideas about yourself help us integrate all the life events around a central concept of the self, giving meaning and purpose to one's life.

The research indicates that integrating negative life experiences into a coherent narrative can enhance meaning in one's life, as evidenced by interventions where depressed participants who restructured their life stories reported higher levels of meaning. Research even shows that integrating negative life experiences into a coherent tale means trying to make sense of or find meaning in these events, which can actually increase the overall meaning in one's life. So even studies with the intervention involving the depressed participants also show that when they were asked to integrate such negative life experiences into a more coherent story, it enhanced their meaning in life. Thus, the entire process of self-understanding, self-integration, and reconnecting with oneself can actually contribute to meaning in one's life.

Now, in the context of self, when we are in touch with the true self, we can actually contribute to meaning in life as well. Understanding and being in touch with one's true self is associated with a higher sense of meaning in life, even more so than self-esteem. So, if

you are more in touch with your authentic self, who are you as a person, authentically? The more you are connected with that, the more it can contribute to a higher meaning in life. Then you will find yourself in totality, what you are, what you want, what your goal is, and your directions in life, and so on. You will be in more touch with your authentic self, which can direct all these things.

The experimental studies reveal that reminders of one's true self enhance the meaning of life. The more you remember who you truly are as a person, rather than just integrating what you see around you and creating a false self, the more you connect with your true self; the more likely you are to find meaning in your life. Alienation from the true self, as seen in college students who struggle to find purpose in their studies, often leads to feelings of meaninglessness. Thus, the more a person becomes alienated from their true self, the less meaningful their life becomes. Some studies show that, especially college students who struggle to see purpose in what they are studying, if they don't see any purpose in what they are learning or if whatever they are studying is not in alignment with their true self, they may find that this can lead to feelings of meaninglessness in whatever they are doing. Because it is not connected to their authentic selves, whatever they are, they cannot find meaning in what they are doing. When we are in touch with our true selves, including even our flawed parts and weaknesses, we don't chase a false version of life. We live meaningfully rooted in honesty, humility, and purpose.

This is how it can provide direction, purpose, and meaning in one's life. So, the next one is mental time travel. This is how we can create meaning in life by becoming more authentic and connecting with our true selves. It can make our lives more meaningful. So, this is another way to enhance the meaning in one's life. So, the next one is mental time travel. Let us see how mental time travel can contribute to the meaning in one's life. When we discuss mental time travel, we refer to projecting ourselves into the past or future. How do you project yourself into the past and into the future? That's how you mentally travel to the past or the future. So, it's a very constructed kind of self that is projected. Or some alternative realities. Helping individuals to experience a sense of continuity and coherence across time. Thus, this mental time travel provides us with a sense of continuity. I am a person who has been experiencing various life events over time. So, there is a sense of continuity because we can mentally travel through time. We can see what I was in the past, who I am now, and what I am going to become. There is a sense of continuity that this mental time travel provides for the sense of self. This process is linked to increasing meaning in life by fostering a connection between the present self and the distant self. So, it gives a sense of meaning because you find a sense of continuity. You see, whatever we have done may be right, wrong, or something in between. So, you learn from that and move ahead. All these things give you a sense of meaning because there was somebody in the past. Now you are this person, what you want to become, and so on. The concept of mental time travel enhances the meaning of life by fostering a connection between the different

selves that exist in the present, past, and future. Now, in terms of mental time travel, one aspect that can contribute to a sense of meaning in life is called nostalgia. Nostalgia is an important aspect that can enhance meaning in one's life, although it is not necessarily so. So, nostalgia is about thinking about something in our past. Especially the positive things that have happened and so on. So, it is a sentimental longing for the past and is inherently connected to different aspects of the self, making it meaningful and so on. A nostalgic feeling is when you sentimentally long for something from the past that has already happened. There have been positive experiences or emotional moments that have occurred. So, you keep going back to that again. That sense of nostalgia happens, you know, when we meet old friends. Suddenly, all the memories of the past, or the good times we had with that person, come flooding back. So that's called nostalgia: a sentimental longing for the past. These nostalgic memories help individuals enhance coherence, purpose, and a sense of significance in their lives, especially when nostalgia is actively evoked. When nostalgia is actively evoked, it can contribute to all the dimensions of meaning in life, including coherence, purpose, and a sense of significance, because many of these past positive memories and emotional experiences give us a sense of a coherent self, and we derive meaning from them. Studies show that frequent nostalgia or specific nostalgic triggers, such as scents or songs, are associated with a higher level of meaning. At times, particular fragrances and types of music can evoke memories associated with past events. This trigger can also sometimes contribute to a higher sense of meaning in life and a feeling of continuity. Nostalgia has been found to help people maintain meaning during times of crisis, enhance their overall life meaning, and increase motivation.

Even during the crisis, some nostalgic experiences can help us deal with demanding situations by learning from past experiences. People can maintain meaning in their lives through these nostalgic experiences. So, whatever good has happened, all the emotional things find meaning in the present existence because of the many events that have occurred. So, that is how it can contribute to the meaning in one's life. Nostalgia basically affirms our identity. So that is how it contributes to the meaning. One way it does this is by affirming our identity by reminding us of who we were and helping us understand who we are today. So, it builds a connection between the past self and the present self. It gives a sense of identity. Nostalgia provides a sense of continuity. Again, it connects our present self with the past. It fosters a sense of identity and continuity in life stories. So, it gives a sense of meaning. There is a coherent story that spans from the past to the present.

Now, one important caveat that we need to understand is that not all nostalgia is beneficial. Naturally occurring feelings of nostalgia, particularly when associated with negative emotions, can lower one's sense of well-being and overall life satisfaction. Some nostalgic experiences that are tied to very negative past experiences may not have a positive impact. One must understand that we are primarily discussing how positive, nostalgic experiences

can contribute to meaning in one's life. In terms of mental time travel, one aspect involves going to the past, which we can refer to as nostalgic experiences. Another aspect of mental time travel is that we go to the future. So that's called prospection or future-oriented goals. This prospection is about imagining the future. It is very crucial and helps to link essential goals with the passage of time. We envision our future. We set goals for our future because they are not yet present; they are likely to happen in the future, so we can only imagine them. This imagination of the future is crucial because it links to essential goals and milestones in time. It gives us direction on where to go and all these things. This contributes to a purpose in life. Considering the future, primarily through valued goals, contributes to a sense of meaning by facilitating an understanding of life's coherence. So that is something significant. Mostly, we set goals for our future, which give direction in our lives.

Research indicates that people tend to rate future-oriented thoughts as more meaningful than present-focused thoughts. So, future-oriented thoughts actually give us a sense of direction in our lives. So, that is a sense of meaning in our lives, which is what I want to do next. Therefore, future projects and other factors are crucial in providing us with energy, motivation, and direction in our lives. All this contributes to the meaning of our lives. Imagining future milestones and what we need to do, such as marking the start of a new decade, often prompts reflections on our entire life story, fostering a sense of coherence and meaning. Research also shows that the vividness and detail of mental images, whether from the past or the future, enhance the meaning of life. Detailed mental simulations lead to a stronger connection between the past and the future. The more thoroughly you can think about the past and future in terms of mental time travel, the stronger the connection becomes between these concepts and meaning in life, and so on. Now, these reflections, thoughts, or imaginations about the future help us create meaning in our lives by guiding our purposes. Imagining future goals gives us direction. It motivates action; future dreams and aspirations energize us to take meaningful steps today. It creates hope that we will be doing something in the future. Anticipating better days can help us endure present hardships. Even though your current situation may not be ideal, you expect something positive to happen. It gives you energy and hope for the future. This also gives you meaning in life, regardless of your current context.

Lastly, it shapes values by prioritizing what matters most, considering the long-term impact and legacy. It helps us prioritize what is more important in our lives and guides our actions accordingly. So, this is it. These are some of the possible mechanisms by which prospection can contribute to meaning in our lives. So, in terms of summarizing mental time travel and how it contributes to meaning in life, mental time travel, either through nostalgia or prospection or future-oriented thinking, helps individuals form a coherent connection across different points in time. It gives you a sense of continuity, as you are moving somewhere and coming from somewhere, which enhances the meaning in our lives. The quality of these mental images, including their vividness and details, plays a vital role in

fostering or facilitating a sense of self-continuity and meaning. This is another way to increase meaning in our lives, whether through revisiting past experiences or imagining future goals. This is another pathway that can enhance meaning in our lives.

The last one is about mortality awareness. Our awareness of death is a very unique aspect of human beings; we are living a life while also knowing that one day we are going to die. This is a very unique situation for human beings because, due to our cognitive ability, we realize that this life is not eternal, and we are going to die at some point in time. Now, this aspect of mortality awareness, awareness of the death that is going to come in the future, actually, in a very paradoxical way, can give meaning to your life.

Let's examine how it can contribute. Therefore, mortality awareness, or the understanding that life is a finite amount of time, can prompt individuals to question the meaning of their existence. Many people ask these more profound questions because of this realization of death that they feel. What, then, is the point of all these things when you are ultimately going to die one day? As Tolstoy famously said, or as he pondered, does life have meaning when it is inevitably overshadowed by death? Can we find meaning in life when it is nearing its end, approaching death? This existential concern is central to many philosophical and psychological perspectives on the concept of meaning. There is, paradoxically, a way in which this whole sense of death contributes to meaning. Research shows that acknowledging death can lead to a more authentic and meaningful life. When you know your life is finite, for many people, it actually makes their life more meaningful because time is then minimal; you cannot waste it. This sense of mortality awareness can actually give more meaning to life, as it encourages a more finite perspective, recognizing that one doesn't have eternity to accomplish everything. So, you have a finite amount of time, and people prioritize more important things. This paradox suggests that while awareness of death may initially seem to decrease one's meaning in life because you think ultimately you are going to die, it raises the question: what is the point of anything? However, it actually serves as motivation for individuals to live more fully and purposefully. When you realize that life is limited, it contributes to a more meaningful life; when things are limited, you have to use them properly, use your time effectively, and prioritize the more important things. In this way, it contributes to the meaning of one's life.

One model, called a dual existential system model, was proposed by Cazzolino in 2006. It suggests that explicit thought about death, when people think about their death, can trigger growth-oriented processes such as increased spirituality and greater focus on intrinsic goals. When people think about death, it actually shifts their perspectives on life and propels them towards religion, spirituality, and more inherent goals that are more authentic to them. All these things can contribute to further meaning in one's life. This model also states that people who experience near-death experiences, such as accidents, often report a greater sense of fulfillment in their pursuits, being less concerned about others' opinions, and having a more profound understanding of spirituality and meaning. When people come

back from death, such as surviving accidents or chronic diseases, the meaning of life becomes much more critical for them, and their sense of purpose increases after such near-death experiences because they have encountered death up close and returned, and now all the priorities of life change. Now life can no longer be taken for granted. They realized it very strongly. That enhances their meaning in life. So, awareness of mortality does not necessarily diminish the meaning of life. Apparently, it looks like if you become aware of your death, it may reduce your meaning in life. But this may not be true for most people. It can actually enhance the value of life because life is limited, making it more precious and meaningful. The finite nature of life can motivate individuals to focus on what truly matters, fostering a more profound sense of purpose. This is how, for most people, it actually enhances the meaning of life. These are essentially six pathways or variables through which meaning can be improved in our lives. We have discussed each of them, and all these things can be enhanced in our lives, ultimately strengthening the meaning of our lives. Now, let's examine the concept of improving one's life through a different lens. These are the specific variables we discussed.

Now, let us examine the lens of logotherapy, as proposed by Viktor Frankl. How can we look at the meaning of life, and how can we enhance it? As we have seen from the discussions in the last lecture and today's lecture, the meaning of life can be summarized using these three dimensions. One, that meaning in life arises from comprehending one's existence. The more you can make sense of your existence, the more meaningful your life will become. Identifying and achieving valued goals. The more you can identify and achieve goals, the more it gives you a sense of purpose in life, which is a part of meaning in life and feeling significant and fulfilled by it. So, when you think that your life is substantial, you are engaging in meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile activities, which also enhances the meaning in one's life. Therefore, meaning in life stems from all three dimensions and our unique combination of these dimensions.

Now, beyond all this, we have talked about some specific variables in today's lecture. Now, several other ideas can enhance our understanding of how to bring meaning to our lives. Let us examine some of Viktor Frankl's ideas, as he is one of the most significant figures in the research on meaning in life, whether from a psychological or philosophical perspective. Let us examine some of Viktor Frankl's ideas. Now, he discovered a meaning, and Viktor Frankl proposed something called logotherapy. So, Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist. He was a Holocaust survivor and the founder of logotherapy. So, he was a victim of Nazi concentration camp, and he survived that whole concentration camp of Holocaust. So, he went through all the horrible experiences of concentration camps, and he survived that. After that, he developed logotherapy, a therapy focused on finding meaning in life.

Logotherapy discusses some of its basic principles. One is that life has meaning under all circumstances, even the miserable ones. He says we can find meaning in life in any circumstances, even in the worst circumstances, because he has seen the worst of human experiences in the concentration camps. We cannot think of anything worse than this, and he could see that people could find meaning even in the most challenging circumstances. Second, our primary motivation for living is the will to find meaning in life. He said that one of the most fundamental motivations of human beings is the desire to find meaning. So, people want to find meaning in their lives. Without meaning, we cannot truly grasp the complete sense of well-being; life will never truly come alive. So that sense of meaning is the fundamental motivation of human beings. Third, humanity has the freedom of attitudinal choice even in situations of unchangeable afflictions. The third important factor, which is crucial in terms of application, is that we have the freedom to choose our attitude; regardless of what happens externally, we still have one freedom. All the other freedoms could be taken away from you externally. You may be put in prison, so there is no freedom outside. However, one freedom that remains with human beings is the kind of attitude we choose to adopt in any circumstance. That freedom no one can take away. So that is the key to finding meaning in one's life. So, we will look into that a little bit elaborately. So, Frankl said we can discover meaning in life in three different ways. There could be three different ways we can find meaning in our lives. One is by creating a job or doing a deed, such as painting a picture, making music, or achieving any other task. So, meaning in life comes from work, whether it's through our work or the actions we take. It could be painting a picture, making music, or any other achievement task. According to Frankl, all work-related things give us meaning in our lives. When he was in the Holocaust situations or concentration camps, his passion for writing books on psychotherapy and helping people gave him the will to survive. He could survive because he had a passion for writing a book and creating psychotherapy to help people, which ultimately enabled him to cope with the difficult situations in his life. The second is by experiencing something such as natural beauty or encountering someone like loved ones; it may include connections with a spouse, family, friends, God, or the sacred. The second source of meaning that comes into our lives is through meeting people, encountering loved ones, or connecting with a higher power, such as God or the divine. So, it's about when we experience something beautiful. It could be natural beauty, or it could be encountering people around us. So, from the connections we discussed in the earlier variable, social connections, or a connection with God and divine power, as well. All these things give us meaning in our lives. For Frankl, when he was in the concentration camp, memories of his wife and his connection to God helped him survive and find meaning in the concentration camp. He could survive all these life's ordeals because he hoped to meet his wife. His connection with his wife, both mentally and emotionally, and his connection to God helped him survive, as it gave him meaning and the will to persevere. The third is that we can find meaning by adopting attitudes. What kind of attitude do we take? We take towards unavoidable suffering. When we suffer in

our lives, the attitude we take towards it can decide the meaning we give it. We have the potential to make meaningful choices and maintain our attitudes, even in the face of unbearable and unavoidable suffering and adversity. When life is tough, with unbearable suffering and so on, even in such situations, what kind of attitude do we adopt toward that is the key to finding meaning. So, in the concentration camp, Frankl observed that some people would give up and die soon. Many people died and committed suicide in the concentration camp because it was a horrible situation. At the same time, he found other people who tolerated their suffering with courage and grace, as they had some meaning in their lives. He discovered that some people could survive because they had found meaning in their lives. They had some plans for the future. Whatever the reason, or if they had some reasons to leave, those people did not die. In that direction, Frankl said, everything can be taken from a man, but one thing remains: the last of human freedom to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances. This is humanity's last freedom. No one can take that away. Everything else can be taken away in terms of the external world, but what kind of attitude, what kind of perception do you take towards what is happening in your life? That is humanity's last freedom. No one can take that away. So, that is one of the essential aspects.

Frankl believed that suffering is an inevitable part of life. And life has meaning in all circumstances, even the most miserable ones. We only need to reflect and find out. Even in those sufferings, there is meaning. We can find out if you are reflecting properly. He further argued that, in all circumstances, individuals have the freedom to access that which will and find meaning, even in suffering and pain. So, if you reflect properly and focus on the situations, you will find some meaning even in the unbearable sufferings. This can be achieved by adopting a particular attitude. How can we find it? We must choose the right kind of attitude: freedom that no one can take away from you. This attitude is your last freedom. What kind of attitude do you take about the situation to find meaning? Our ultimate freedom is the ability to choose how we respond to any set of given circumstances, even the most painful ones. In this context, he said, when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. When you cannot change what is happening, you need to change yourself. That means you can change how you change yourself—one of the ways to alter your thought processes and your attitude towards what is happening.

So, he is saying that between stimulus and response, there is a space. Something external, and you respond. So, there is a space between them. In that space lies our power to choose our response. You do not necessarily have to automatically react to what is happening; instead, there is space between them. If you realize that space, you can respond to that situation. Adjust your attitude appropriately rather than automatically reacting to situations. So, in our response lies our growth and freedom. How do you respond? How do you choose

to respond? That is where your growth and freedom lie in that choice, and this is a choice no one can take away from you. He also said people can find meaning in their lives by identifying unique roles that they need to fulfill. People can discover unique roles. You may find that you have a unique role to play in your life for the people around you, and so on. That can also give you a sense of meaning. He said that in some ways suffering ceases to be suffering now it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice, and so on.

Suffering becomes less suffering, or it stops suffering when you see meaning in it. Let us say you feel that it is part of the sacrifice that you are making, so if you see meaning in suffering, then suffering ceases to be suffering. One example is given in his book, "Man's Search for Meaning." Viktor Frankl gave an example of a man who consulted him due to severe depression following the death of his wife. So, this is a person with symptoms of depression who met Viktor Frankl for therapy because he was going through severe depression, and the reason for his depression was basically the death of his wife. Frankl asked him to consider what would have happened if he had died first and his wife had been forced to mourn his death. So, he just asked this question. Suppose in place of your wife, you died first; then all the suffering your wife would have to endure because she would be alive, and she would suffer and mourn your death. So basically, what he is asking is for you to see the meaning of this pattern. Even though it looks like a lot of suffering, the death of a wife is not the only alternative. Your wife was relieved of all the suffering if she survived that person's death. So, Frankl basically helped the older man see that his purpose had been to spare his wife's pain of losing him first. The man was able to recognize that his own suffering had spared his wife from experiencing it. This helped relieve his depression. Essentially, Frankl attempted to help that person make sense of the event or find meaning in their suffering, offering an alternative perspective that helped cure his depression and so on. So, Frankl notes that meaning in life differs from person to person and from situation to situation. You cannot have a general meaning for everyone. Everybody creates meaning from time to time, situation to situation. People also do not have a fixed meaning throughout their lives. Hence, he asserts that there is not a general meaning in life for all humanity, but rather an idiosyncratic meaning that varies at any given moment. So, one has to create moment to moment with the passage of time and so on. Therefore, we cannot discuss the general meaning all the time. People may have a broader sense; they may have a situation-to-situation meaning, and so on. These are some of the key aspects of meaning in life and how we can enhance it through various variables and approaches. All these aspects, regardless of the work, can be integrated into people's lives, thereby improving their overall well-being and sense of meaning. The concept of meaning in life has always been associated with higher well-being, encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being. With that, I will conclude here. Thank you.