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# Set Goals for the Journey

So I am convinced that the greatest part of finding meaning in life is to spend our time doing the things that we feel most passionate about. Sometimes, however, it can take several years before we manage to live our passion. It can be of great help in the meantime to set up goals that will help us one day to reach this place in our lives.

These goals function as magnets that draw us further into personal development. They also provide the energy we need to overcome the obstacles we run into. Therefore it is important that each of us dare think ahead and put together a plan for our future.

These plans should not of course be so inflexible that they prevent us from being spontaneous and living here and now. "For if we sit with our ticket always in front of our faces, we'll probably miss seeing all the new and exciting places," as Swedish recording artist Robert Broberg sings in one of his songs.

However, in order to live harmoniously now, you have to have an idea – even if a vague idea – of what you want to make of your future. You need to recognize that how you spend your time is indeed important. For life doesn't last for ever. This we know. It is important that we make the most of it before it is too late.

I don't know if you have any goals for your life, but I definitely have things that I want to accomplish before I die. Of course, there is no guarantee that we will reach all our goals before the end, but that perhaps is not the main point.

For at the exact moment we reach one of our objectives, we lose the strength of its magnetic pull. It is not uncommon that one experiences a period of dejection directly upon attaining a major goal. Life can seem meaningless until we find something new toward which we can direct our attention.

Gunde Svan, Swedish gold and silver medalist in cross-country skiing, asked the following question in a goal-setting workshop. "What should you do if you've already won everything there is to win within a certain sport?" The workshop leader thought quickly and then answered: "Then you need to find a new sport to start competing in."

Not even businesses and organizations always see the importance of creating new objectives. This is especially evident when things are going well, because they are fooled into thinking that at this moment they have no need to push ahead and continue developing. This results in stagnation and gives the competition the opportunity to move ahead. The trick is to continue developing even when everything seems to be going your way.

Often when planning our futures, we begin by assessing where we are today. This is beginning at the wrong end. It is much better to begin by asking ourselves how we want our futures to be, and then to let this vision direct all of our planning.

It is largely a matter of being able to backtrack – of being able to work backwards from your objective to figure out what you must do to reach it. It is also a matter of daring to daydream – of daring to visualize how you really would like your life to be.

If you don't dare to dream, you won't be able to form goals that would help you gather the motivation you need to excel in any particular area. The whole point of having goals is to help you feel that you have something worth striving toward. That is why your goals need to lead toward fulfilling your innermost wishes. This also helps you appreciate your own life. If you are convinced of the importance of your life in this way, then you should find reason to struggle past the obstacles you encounter daily.

Life is like an empty sack. If we do not fill it, it remains empty. In other words, life itself contains no meaning of its own. It is up to each of us to choose a meaning for our lives, and if we do not do this, then our lives will remain meaningless.

You gain a great deal by creating a meaning for your life – and naturally this has to be something of significance to you. But there should also be at least one other person involved. This is because it is difficult to feel a sense of purpose in meeting only your own needs. Everyone, I believe, needs to be influential in someone else's life.

This might be because we are social creatures. We want to be seen and recognized. Perhaps we need to discover ourselves reflected in others. This may also be a way for us to feel less mortal, by knowing that others will remember us and will remember our accomplishments.

*A man's true wealth ...is the good that he does in this world to his fellows.*

*Mohammed*

The life of famous therapist Viktor Frankl is a concrete example of how essential a sense of purpose is to our lives. During WWII, he was taken prisoner and had to survive several different concentration camps. Not long before he was taken prisoner, he had finished writing an important scientific paper in psychology. This manuscript was confiscated at the time of his imprisonment, and yet it became his lifeline.

It was so crucial for Frankl to be able to reconstruct this manuscript and to get it published that this passion carried him through all his suffering in the concentration camps. He witnessed first-hand that his fellow prisoners who had something to live for survived in greater

numbers than did the others. The people who didn't have a reason to live gave up more quickly and succumbed.

In his book *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Frankl writes:

*I repeatedly tried to distance myself from the misery that surrounded me by externalizing it. I remember marching one morning from the camp to the work site, hardly able to bear the hunger, the cold, and the pain of my frozen edema and swollen feet, so swollen from hunger edema and squeezed into my shoes. My situation seemed bleak, even hopeless. Then I imagined that I stood at the lectern in a large, beautiful, warm and bright hall. I was about to give a lecture to an interested audience on, "Psychotherapeutic Experiences in a Concentration Camp" (the actual title I later used at that congress). In the imaginary lecture I reported the things that I am now living through. Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, at that moment I could not dare to hope that some day it would be my good fortune to actually give such a lecture.*

After the war, Frankl developed his own form of therapy called logotherapy, which is based upon the belief that many people today are living in an existential vacuum and do not know what they want to make of their lives. In this industrialized world, we have attained a high standard of living materially, but in many other respects, our quality of life can be found lacking. Frankl believed that this lack of meaning in many instances leads to poor mental health.

The prerequisite to mental health is that we find meaning in our lives. It is of course difficult to disprove this conclusion. It is no less difficult to find good arguments against someone who has survived the horrors of the concentration camps...



Viktor Frankl

## **If you won 17 million dollars:**

**1. Where in the world would you choose as your home? Why? One or more summer residences?**

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**2. What would your home be like? Describe it.**

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**3. Would you work? If so, with what? .....**

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**4. Would you have a family? How many children?**

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**5. What things would you buy? .....**

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**6. Would you travel? Where to? .....**

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**7. What would you want to learn more about? .....**

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