

MEANING OF LIFE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT AND THOSE WITH INTELLECTUAL, HEARING AND VISUAL DISABILITIES

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Abstract: The meaning of life comes from some needs and naïve possibilities and it's build progressively under the influence of the values promoted by a subculture but also from some significant life experiences. Therefore, current behaviors are determined by needs but also by aspirations under the form of the meaning of life. We shall detect behaviors of satisfying some needs, of promotion, of defense and of avoidance of a self-image, of some values and even of a life philosophy that represent a hole that we named `meaning of life`.

This meaning of life, being built under the social norms influences, will present resemblance but will also differ from one individual to another through significant experiences and disability. Therefore, we wanted to study some constitutive aspects of the meaning of life with young people with typical development and with intellectual, visual and hearing disabilities.

Key words: meaning of life, purpose of life , young people with intellectual, visual and hearing disabilities.

The meaning of life doesn't show up just like that, it is obtained in a social way, by interacting with others, based on cultural norms. The meanings identified in each and every one of us, don't just show up, out of nothing, they must be built because nature endows us with needs but doesn't give them meaning. The person

may choose, in the best case scenario, out of the meanings given by the cultural or social norms.

Sometimes, the meaning of life might be represented by a chaotic accumulation of obligations, projects and feelings, that seem to make sense. A remarkable difference between societies and structures it's given by the measure they impose a certain set of beliefs and convictions to their members. Each person builds its own meaning of life, whether they realize it or not.

Victor E. Frankl says that each individual has its own vocation, its own mission, which will lead to fulfilling a certain task that needs to be fulfilled. (Frankl, 2009). A person can find its own meaning of life only by being responsible, but what really matters it's not the meaning of life in general, but more likely the specific sense of one's life at a certain point. The major problem of our times is that modern life gives people a multitude of meanings like language, information, communication, mass-media, symbols, institutions, norms, but not all of these give in exchange a guide about fundamental values.

'The values crisis', as it's named by Baumeister, R.F., represent the only major problem regarding investing life with meaning (Baumeister, 2011). In the majority of cases, people rely only on finding personal identity and on self-knowledge. These give great importance to Self by cultivating exaggerated personal identity, therefore value becomes fundamental. Life has many meanings and therefore there is a chance that most lives do not fit in a single story of life.

The multitude of meanings may determine cases in which certain individuals might ruin their whole life by wrongly identifying their 'true' meaning of life, because the overall meaning of life depends exclusively on us and if we are not cautious enough, our meaning of life might turn into an undefined and unsolved blend of daily problems, complaints, opinions unsafe and clichés. It is important therefore to know how to build their own lives meanings.

Existentialists were aware that most people do not organize their life as they feel and how they want, but do what they are asked and what others do.

If the purpose can be chosen by the individual, then comes authenticity, that is that meaning can be chosen based on their own decisions so given the chance to choose consciously, but where not yield pressures culture or immediate circumstances, the individual is likely to choose a mixture of fragments of meaning. (Heidegger, apud Baumeister, 2011).

Sometimes, the meaning of life might be represented by a chaotic accumulation of obligations, projects and feelings that seem to make sense. A remarkable difference between societies and structures it's given by the measure they impose a certain set of beliefs and convictions to their members. For example, some cultures have a rigid approach, by imposing a certain lifestyle to

each individual while other cultures offer multiple approaches, which makes it difficult for those in search of a suitable meaning for their lives.

Regarding the first issue, the explanation is given by W. Thomas who says that we humans react based on meaning, and these reactions have physical consequences, which means that if something has physical consequences, then it's real. "If men define situations as being real, they become real through their consequences." (Thomas, W., apud Baumeister, 2011, pag. 572).

The second problem finds its solving through an example according to which the description of money or coins by molecular aspects, atomic aspects of color, shape, etc., omit real money function meaning. (Baumeister, 2011).

Life is the result of natural biological processes; it is a physical reality because it is made out of atoms and molecules which follow the laws of nature. About life it is known that it may exist without making sense, but there are cases where meaning precedes life, like in the situation a couple decides to have a baby.

Meaning does not mean the refusal of people to seek happiness or exposing themselves to the risk of harm, but improving, or even overcoming these natural needs. There is a need which fits the limit between natural and cultural needs such as the need to belong to a social group because every human being, at any age would be, feels the need to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with others.

The meaning is related to language and mental connections, it is the shared mental representation of possible links between objects, events and relationships. A feature, the most obvious of meaning, is the ability to establish associations and differences. Even other species with very low intelligence learn how to make associations and differences. Association and differentiation facilitate the design and use of symbols.

Meaning is divided into two main categories. One is the ability to help us discern patterns in the environment, and the second one refers to the individual's ability to control his own behavior and internal states through meaning. For people to be able to adapt, to keep a balance, a harmony between them and the environment, it involves both the possibility that the environment may change so that the person may adapt, but also how man can change in order to perform the same behavior.

The meaning can have several levels. The levels refer to the number and complexity of the links established with other units of meaning. There are short and long term effects of the meaning. The short term ones are represented by lower levels of meaning, while the long term ones are represented by higher levels of sense. (Vallacher și Wegner, apud Baumeister, 2011).

The use of meaning on lower levels ,as name, tend to be concrete and limited in time, however, the use on higher levels can refer to complex relationships. Complex meanings are constructed by combining simple meanings ,also known under the term of *construction*. The lower levels tend to have narrow time frames and are often *deconstructed*, meaning they are deprived of elaborated interpretations. Besides all that, we can say that it is possible to live without finding a meaning which involves all aspects of life. In a man's life we can identify quite a number of short-term projects and purposes, what organizes its immediate activities into meaningful units, but which may not be assembled into a network of superior meanings, through which we could interpret the person's whole life. (Emmons, apud Baumeister, 2011) The most important type of meaning is *standard*, being an abstract concept, used to measure and evaluate objects, people and events.

The use of meaning involves interpretation that is the process by which things or events are given a meaning. The way individuals interpret human life requires knowing the meaning of life.

To interpret something, people compare that thing with other things that they already know or know how they work. Similarly works discerning the meaning of life. By using some standards we can determine whether life is good or bad.

The meaning of life is a product which combines two different things: it creates meaning and gives it to life. Meaning refers to ideas that establish connections between things and arises as a result of simple associations and differences. (Baumeister, 2011).

The four basic needs of meaning are: ***purpose, value, effectiveness and self value***. When a person does not meet the needs of sense, certainly concludes that life does not have enough sense.

Purpose does not necessarily have to be fulfilled or achieved in life, because a person might live a life that is full of meaning by continuously trying to reach a goal, but which will not be achieved not even until death. Human behavior is guided by purpose and results. Using meaning increases the use of goal-orientation because meaning is a significant factor influencing behavioral self-control. Meaning also helps the individual to organize their behavior so as to lead to fulfilling their purpose.

Purpose involves three aspects in order to be achieved: imagining the way or the mood, analyzing and evaluating behaviors in terms of their effectiveness in achieving the goal and the last one, the person has to make decisions to achieve the set goals. The meaning of present events and activities are given by future events because it allows the person to interpret present situations by relating to future events.(Baumeister, 2011).

Human beings are very motivated find valuable sources and to justify their actions. The need of value refers to human motivation of feeling that his actions are correct, good and justifiable. People must feel that their past and present actions are not reprehensible and offensive and want to see their lives as being of positive value. A person`s conviction that a certain action is correct and just is the reason that he will do it , just as the belief that an action might have negative repercussions can prevent us from performing that activity. So we can say that value is a form of motivation.

The meaning of life involves both positive and negative values. Negative values are those that prohibit certain acts. All societies have moral values that describe acceptable behaviors even though most of the moral rules are negative. However, rules tell us what not to do. But kindness does not mean, just the mere absence of evil.

A third need is that of the feeling of effectiveness. People need to feel that, to some extent, can control events.

Effectiveness means that people can feel capable and strong enough to have a meaningful life. A meaningful life represents more than just having goals and values, they need to be able to achieve certain goals and to accomplish values. Effectiveness is closely linked to the concept of control so that individuals can test their sense of effectiveness by controlling the environment. But if a person should perceive its own effectiveness without controlling the environment, it might feel that that need is unsatisfied.

The last need of meaning, the fourth, it that of feeling oneself as being valuable. People must find their life purpose, so that they appear in a favorable light. This need is usually manifested by identifying an aspect through which the person can feel superior to others. The part that helps people excel in many actions is the attempt of becoming superior to others. In other words, the people`s need represents the attempt to find a basis for the positive value of self, the search for criteria that they consider good and valuable and by which they can convince others about these qualities because, another need of the individuals it that of being respected by themselves and by their peers.

The four needs of meaning are of double importance. First they help us understand how people form their meaning of life, and secondly, they help us in our study of a person`s meaning of life.

Research Objectives

Objectives and research hypotheses

1. Highlighting some structures of the meaning of life for young people with typical development and for those with intellectual, hearing and visual disabilities
2. Analyzing issues about the meaning of life in the four categories of youth.

Research hypotheses

1. We assume that the meaning of life is marked by age specific: need for independence, family, fun and work.
2. We assume that disabled young people the value of life is given by their health and seeking respect from peers

Research methodology

Inspired mainly by RF Baumeister, we created a questionnaire to identify the meaning of life, life fears, frustrations and life situations avoided as well as indifferent life situations. (After Baumeister, RF, 2011).

The questionnaire contains 15 items with open answer. The responses are analyzed by weight and interpreted according to the meaning set out above, regarding the aspect of the meanings of life.

Samples research

They were selected (random selection) four batches of 30 young people (a total of 120 subjects) with chronological ages between 18-35 years, and relative equality between the sexes as follows: a group of young people with typical development (TT), a group of young people with visual disabilities (TDV), a group of young people with mild intellectual disabilities (TDI) and a fourth group of young deaf people (TDA). They are taught either in special technological schools or are graduates of the special education system and belong to persons with disabilities associations.

Presentation, analysis and interpretation of survey data

Table.1
Share of the main responses of youth to item 1

item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV %	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
1. What do you appreciate about life?	Honesty	40	30	0	0
	Health	23,3	30	10	20,3
	Family	20	0	26,6	30
	People/their character	0	30	0	26,6
	respect	0	0	40	0
	other	16,6	10	13,3	20

We note that young people with typical development mostly appreciate *honesty* (40%) young visually impaired people also appreciate (30%) *honesty, health and people*, those with intellectual disabilities appreciate *respect* (40%) and those with hearing disabilities appreciate *people`s character*(26.6%) and then, *health* (20.3%).

Table. 2

Share of the main responses of the young to item 2

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
2.what are you indifferent about?	Malice	46,6	43,3	0	0
	Beating	0	0	20	0
	Gossip	0	0	0	20
	Strangers	0	0	43,3	0
	Nothing	23,3	30	23,3	46,6
	Stupidity	23,3	20	0	0
	Football	0	0	0	13,3
	other	6,6	6,6	13,3	20

Regarding the elements of life that are treated with indifference, *malice* is mentioned by young people with typical development (46.6%), those with visual disabilities also mention *malice* (43.3%), those with intellectual disabilities noted *strangers* (43.3%) and those with hearing disabilities state that *nothing* in life is indifferent to them. (46.6%).

Table. 3

Weight of the main responses of young people in Item 3

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
3. What do you enjoy in your life?	Family/friends	33,3	30	23,3	40
	Progress	16,6	0	0	0
	Happiness	33,3	0	0	0
	Movies	0	0	0	26,6
	Work	0	0	36,6	0
	walking	0	36,6	30	0
	Trips	0	0	0	20
	Socializing	0	20	0	0
	other	16,6	13,3	10	13,3

Regarding the elements that make the greatest pleasure in life, young people with typical development mentioned *family* and *joy* (33.3%), those with visual disabilities, *walking* (36.6%) and *family* (30%), those with intellectual disabilities *work* (36.6%) and *walking* (30%) and those with hearing disabilities, *family / friends* (40%).

Table. 4

Weight of the main responses of youth to item 4

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
4.what do you think might harm you?	Illness	40	30	0	36,6
	Evilness	23,3	56,7	43,3	26,6
	Beating	0	0	30	0
	Betrial	23,3	0	0	0
	Earthquake	0	0	0	20
	Nobody	0	0	16,6	0
	Other	13,3	13,3	10	16,6

Regarding fears, *disease* is mentioned by young people with typical development (40%) and by those visual impairment (36.6%), those with visual disabilities mention *malice* (56.7%), as well as young people with mild intellectual disabilities (43,3 %).

Table. 5

Weight of the main youth answers to item 5

Item	answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
5. What would you like to do but you are not able to at the moment?	Independence	30			
	To gain my sight back		36,6		
	Walking	30	30	13,3	33,3
	Playing			33,3	
	Working	23,3	20	40	
	Staying				16,6
	A home				13,3
	Talking				16,6
	other	16,6	13,3	33,3	20

We see answers vary at the item covering the gap between actual behavior and the desired way: young people with typical development would like *to walk and be independent*, although they do not do this (30%), *walking* is also prized, although they do not do it, by young people with visual disabilities (30%) and by those with hearing disabilities (33.3%). *Work* is what young people with intellectual disabilities lack (40%). In addition, young people with visual disabilities want *to see* (36.6%).

Table. 6
Share main youth answers to item 6

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
6. what wouldn't you like to do?(what you avoid doing?)	Fighting	36,6		50	
	Evil		46,3		33,3
	Lying		26,6		
	Offending		16,6		
	Beating			13,3	
	Unfulfillement	20			
	Others words	30			
	Learning			30	
	Cleaning				16,6
	Staying in the country side				20
	Loneliness				13,3
	Other	13,3	10	6,6	16,6

Responses regarding avoidance behaviors have focused on the frameworks of doing harm - young people with visual disabilities (46.3%), those with hearing disabilities(33.3%) and on those of quarrel, young people with typical development (36.6%) and those with intellectual disabilities (50%).

Table. 7

Weight of the main responses of young people to item 7

Item	answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
7. what does it mean to you to live a good life?	Fulfilling wishes	20			
	Money				40
	To see		20		
	Voice				20
	Having fun		16,6		
	Family	33,3			33,3
	The company of friends			20	
	peace			30	
	Independence			36,6	
	Health	33,3	43,3		
	other	13,3	20	13,3	6,6

Various subjects gave answers to the question of what constitutes a good life for them. Young people with typical development appreciate *family* and *health* (33%), *health* being assessed also by visually impaired young people (43.3%), *peace* (30%) and *independence* (36.6%) represent welfare for young people with intellectual disabilities, and for those with hearing disabilities *money* (40%) and *family* (33.3%) are significant.

Table. 8

Weight of the main responses of young people under Item 8

Item	answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
8.what do you want to receive from life?	Happiness	46,6	20		
	Respect			30	
	Health	23,3	56,6	23,3	30
	A job			33,3	13,3
	Money				50
	Sight		23,3		
	Family	20			
	Other	10		13,3	6,6

Regarding life `offerings`, young people with typical development (46.6%) want to receive *happiness*, those with visual disabilities want *health* (56.6%), young people with intellectual disabilities want *employment* (33.3%) and *respect* (30%) and those with hearing disabilities want to receive *money*.

Table. 9
Weight of the main responses of youth to item 9

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
9. how do you think you should act?	Respect	43,3	60		20
	Nice			70	33,3
	Polite			26,6	
	fair				36,6
	Common sense		16,6		
	optimism	20			
	Dignity	26,6	16,6		
	Other	10	6,6	3,3	10

Respectful behavior is appreciated by young people with typical development (43.3%) and those with visual disabilities (60%) and "*nice*" is considered by those with intellectual (70%), hearing (33.3%) disabilities. The latter also appreciate *correct* behavior (36.6%).

Table. 10
Share of the main responses of youth to item 10

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
10. Is your current behaviour the one that you want?	Yes	66,6	60	73,3	83,3
	No	23,3	33,3	20	10
	Yes and no	10	6,6	6,6	6,6

A similar situation is given by all young people, when they evaluate that their current behavior is consistent with that they desire. The scores range between 60 and 83.3%.

Table. 11

Weight of the main responses of young people in Item 11

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
11. do you believe that what happens to your life is of your own contribution?	Yes	90	60	70	60
	No	3,3	30	26,6	33,3
	Yes and no	6,6	10	3,3	6,6

Regarding internal life control, young people think they are in control, in an overwhelming proportion (60 to 90%).

Table. 12

Weight of the main responses of young people in Item 12

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
12. How would you like to be treated?	Respect	46,6	76,6	36,6	36,6
	Nice			63,3	
	With calm/with patience				40
	Civil				20
	As I treat them	53,3	23,3		
	other				3,3

When asked what concerns the way they want to be treated by others, the answers are different. Young people with typical development will have a *similar approach to that of their own* (53.3%), those with visual disabilities would like to be treated with respect (76.6%), "nice" will be the behavior of others towards young people with intellectual disabilities, and young people with hearing disabilities want to be treated with *respect* (36.6%) and *patience* (40%)

Table. 13

Weight of the main responses of youth to item 13

Item	answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
13. At the time being, are you treated as you like?	Yes	63,3	40	63,3	33,3
	No	13,3	43,3	30	13,3
	Yes and no	23,3	16,6	6,6	53,3

Currently they are treated according to their wishes typically developing young people and those with intellectual disabilities (63.3%), young people with visual disabilities are treated differently (40% according to their wishes and 43.3% inadequate), and those with hearing disabilities have part of the ambiguous attitude (53.3%).

Table. 14

Weight of the main responses of youth to item 14

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
14. What do you think is the value of life?	Happiness	36,6			
	Respect			33,3	
	Family	30	33,3	10	36,6
	Money				43,3
	Health	16,6	53,3	30	13,3
	Other	16,6	13,3	16,6	6,6

The value of life is considered to be *happiness* by 36.6% of young people with typical development, *health* is appreciated by those with visual disabilities (53.3%) and those with intellectual disabilities. The last ones also value *respect* (33.3%) and young people with hearing disabilities appreciate *money* (43.3%).

Table. 15
Weight of the main responses of youth to item 15

Item	Answer	TT (%)	TDV (%)	TDI (%)	TDA (%)
15. Are you satisfied with your life?	Yes	73,3	50	93,3	46,6
	No	10	36,6	6,6	10
	yes and no	16,6	13,3	3,3	43,3

All young people are satisfied with their lives. Young people with typical development in a rate of 73.3%, the visually impaired 50%, people with intellectual disabilities 93.3% and 46.6% those with hearing disabilities, but there is room for improvement to 43.3%.

Conclusions

Our conclusions are based on the synthesis and interpretation of research results based on search attitudes and behaviors or identifying a way of life: items 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 5:12; attitudes concerning fears identification and avoidance of situations and behaviors: items 4 and 6; life control situations and frustration: items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 5; indifference: ITEM 2.

1. Attitudes and behaviors identified or sought that give meaning to life.
 - a. Young people with typical development (TT): in the first place there is *family and happiness*, then *sincerity, joy and respect*.
 - b. Young people with visual disabilities (TDV): first we find *health*, followed by *respect* and third - *sincerity, people, family, walking, recovery of sight*.
 - c. Young people with mild intellectual disabilities (IDD): first is *respect and work*, then "*good behavior*", and in the third place we find *walking, independence, peace and health*.
 - d. Young people with hearing disabilities (TDA): *family* comes first, followed by *money* and in the third place, "*good behavior*" and *fair and friends*
2. Avoidant fears and behaviors:
 - a. Young with typical development (TT): *disease, argument, gossip*.
 - b. Young people with visual disabilities (TDV): *to hurt and to be treated with malice*.
 - c. Young people with mild intellectual disabilities (IDD): *malice, strife*.
 - d. Young people with hearing disabilities (TDA) : *disease, to do evil*.

3. Frustrations and locus of life control

Frustrations:

- a. Young people with typical development (TT): *too little respect, independence and ride*
- b. Young people with visual disabilities (TDV): *does not see and is not treated with respect*
- c. Young people with disabilities mild intellectual (TDI): are not treated "well" and don't have a job.
- d. Young people with hearing disabilities (TDA): are not treated with patience, respect and do not walk enough.

All young people say they are responsible and in control of their lives, yet visually impaired young people seem to believe that they lack control over their lives.

4. What are they indifferent to?

- a. Young with typical development (TT): *malice*
- b. Young people with visual disabilities (TDV): to hurt and be treated with malice.
- c. Young people with mild intellectual disabilities (IDD): foreigners
- d. Young people with hearing disabilities (TDA): malice

What seems to be alike to all young people is the need to be respected and to have a secure and pleasant environment amongst family or friends, to have fun and relax walking. They are trying to find a good health to enable them to be happy and be able to work. Honesty and independence are valued as much as money (especially by hearing impaired young).

They avoid and fear of: illness, quarrels, "wickedness" and gossip.

They think they can control their lives and the main frustration comes from disrespect, having little fun like walking, lack of patience, too little independence and even coming from disability (especially visual) which limits self-control.

Although they say they are indifferent to evil (TT and TDV) that does not come out of their previous answers. Young people with hearing disabilities are not indifferent to anything whatsoever, and those with mental disabilities are indifferent to strangers, being well anchored in the concrete known.

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