

Transition Domain: Spiritual Well-being



Explanation of Spiritual Well-Being Transition Domain

In this document, we move up to the top level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is the young person's **need for self-fulfillment** (e.g., self-actualization). In short, this is about the uniquely human need to live one's life with purpose and thereby acquire a sense meaning for one's particular existence.¹

The need for meaning is a "meta-need,"² or a higher need associated not with having or doing, but with being; one's existence; **the reason for which one lives one's life**.

Research is advancing a new theory of youth spiritual development as a universal domain of development, describing spiritual development as a constant, ongoing, and dynamic interplay between one's inward journey and one's outward journey.

(Peter Benson, Eugene Roehlkepartain & Peter Scales, 2012)

Making one's life meaningful is a critically important aspect of recovery! This notion of recovery entails much more than managing and eliminating symptoms. Rather, even in the face of persistent symptoms,³ it entails making one's existence purposeful, significant, and coherent (e.g., having some degree of order, making sense). A summary of the supporting research on these elements of meaning-making is provided below:⁴

- Satisfying goals or purposes (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Emmons, 2003; Frankl, 1963, 1984; Klinger, 1977; Ryff & Singer, 1998).
- Sense that one's life is significant and is coherent as opposed to chaotic (Hicks & King, 2009b; King, Hicks, Krull & Del Gaiso, 2006).
- Feeling that one's life makes sense to oneself (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002).

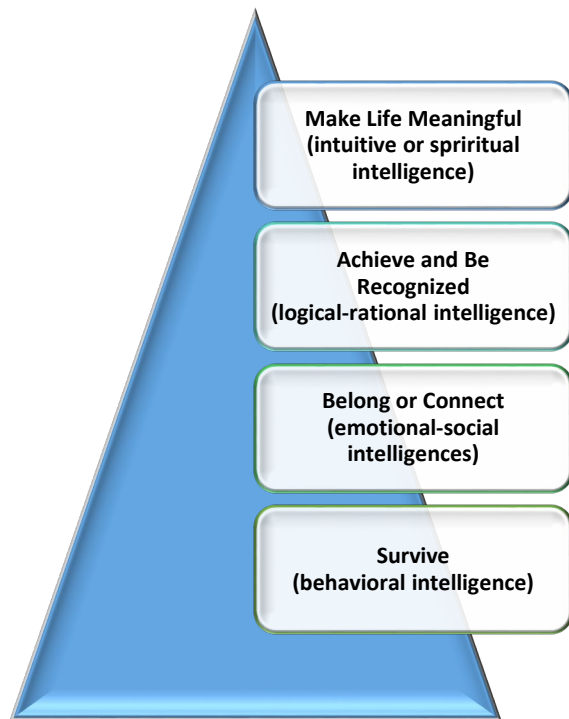
¹ Viktor E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, A Plume Book, 1969; Viktor E. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*, Simon and Schuster, 1978; Marie S. Dezelic & Gabriel Ghanoum, *Trauma Treatment – Healing the Whole Person: Meaning-Centered Therapy and Trauma Treatment Foundational Phase-Work Manual*, Presence Press International, 2016

² Nicolai Groeger, "Meta Needs in the Context of Schema Therapy: Psychometric Qualities of a New Meta Needs Questionnaire and Relationships with Depression, Anxiety and Schemas," *Maastricht Student Journal of Psychology and Neuroscience*, 2012

³ David Pettie & Andrea M. Triolo, "Illness as Evolution: The Search for Identity and Meaning in the Recovery Process," *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Winter 1999

⁴ Rebecca J. Schlegel & Joshua A Hicks, "The True Self and Psychological Health: Emerging Evidence and Future Directions," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2011

Intuitive Intelligence



The intelligence most directly associated with spiritual well-being is intuitive intelligence, also referred to as spiritual intelligence. This intelligence is about knowing self, knowing one's world, and establishing one's reason for being in the world (e.g., meaning-making).

As discussed in the previous Challenges, intelligence is about the capacity to respond to the world in a manner that fosters one's well-being. Responding to one's world is built in, what is called instinct - and intelligences serve these hard-wired, genetically-determined instincts.

Intuitive or spiritual intelligence serves our highest instinct, which is the instinct to make meaning. By the way, this is also the instinct that makes us uniquely human.

The illustration above shows all four instincts and their corresponding intelligences. When all is going well with transitioning into adulthood, the young person's highest instinct and forming intuitive intelligence begin running the show, that is, they are increasingly led by their desire to live a fulfilling life. (This emerged as a distinctive feature of the Millennial Generation.)

When transitioning into adulthood isn't going well, the lowest instinct runs the show, that is, they are led by a desire to survive at an immediate level of gratification (i.e., materialism, living on a purely sensory level). Of course, as the recent science of happiness⁵ and positive psychology⁶ have empirically shown, eventually such a way of living lacks fulfillment and can bring with it a host of mental health difficulties.

Formula for Self-Fulfillment

So, the young person's formula for self-fulfillment has two parts, as follows:

- Part One: Establish a noble meaning or reason for one's life based on one's talents, passions, abilities, interests, strengths, etc.). This is the "why" for one's existence (e.g., one's task in life, mission, life project, or calling⁷).

⁵ Carol D. Ryff & Burton H. Singer, "Know Thyself and Become What You Are: A Eudaimonic Approach to Psychological Well-Being," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2008

⁶ *Positive Psychology: A Harvard Medical School Special Health Report*, 2009

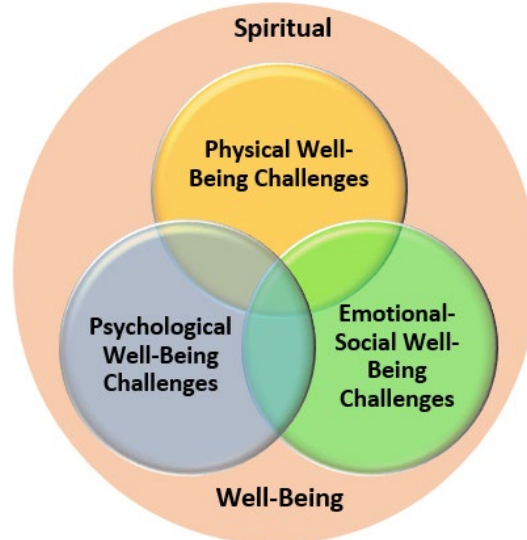
⁷ William Damon, *The Path to Purpose: How Young People Find Their Calling in Life*, Free Press, 2008; James Hillman, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, Random House, 1996; Gregg Levoy, *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*, Three Rivers Press, 1997

- Part Two: Bring this noble meaning to how you go about surviving (physical well-being challenges), belonging and connecting (emotional-social well-being challenges), and achieving and earning recognition (psychological well-being challenges).

This formula entails the aforementioned constant, ongoing, and dynamic interplay between one’s inward journey and one’s outward journey (Peter Benson, Eugene Roehlkepartain & Peter Scales, 2012). We have established that this “inward journey” is essentially about establishing a meaning for one’s life, one’s “reason for being.”

A Different Approach to Practices for Spiritual Well-Being Challenges

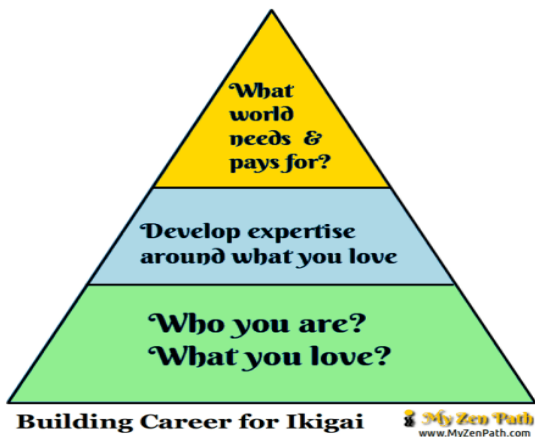
Unlike the three previous domains of well-being (physical, emotional-social, psychological) and their related challenges, this domain is a permanent, ongoing “background challenge,” if you will (see illustration below). Accordingly, in this section no attempt is made to depict what particular challenges in this domain may look like or propose specific practices to consider.



Indeed, it may be a rare event that a young person expresses any of the above in a straightforward manner, for example by saying something like, “You know, I haven’t quite figured out a meaning for my life. So I need some help in coming up with my purpose, my mission. Can you help me with that?” Rather, it is more likely that the need for meaning is a “background challenge,” or the backdrop against which challenges such as housing, substance use, and repairing relationships are dealt with.

Spiritual well-being is essentially the ultimate source for internal motivation and self-regulation in working through challenges, as in **“I will get through this difficulty with housing and resolve it because I’m here in this community to do something important.”** To this end, a broad framework for providing support to young people in their often unconscious efforts to live fulfilling lives is presented below.

Supporting Young People's Quest for Self-Fulfillment



The illustration on the left is an excellent way to depict the need for self-fulfillment that is at the center of spiritual well-being challenges. The term “Ikigai” at the bottom translates “reason for being.”

That’s a pretty good way to think about making one’s life meaningful: establishing one’s reason for being in the world. The three levels of the illustration offer a useful way to think of about how the YES! approaches to supporting young people can facilitate this difficult work of establishing a reason for their lives. Let’s take a quick look at each.

Engage

As shown in the illustration, engaging young people that can benefit from a deeper sense of self-fulfillment can start with helping them identify what they love and form a keener sense of who they are (e.g., strengths, talents, abilities, hopes, passions, etc.). For young people who wonder out loud, “Who am I?,” a start point for dealing with that question may be exploring “Well, what do you love?” (e.g.; love to do, think about, hobbies, interests, things that excite you, etc.).

Equip

Equipping young people to establish fulfilling lives can then focus on helping, guiding, and training them in developing expertise or specific skills around what they love. Ponder this for a moment, because it is huge. There are scores of ways to go about helping a young person sharpen their skills around what they love, while keeping in mind that the skills are transferrable. This means they can be used in the world in work. For example, a love of hunting requires good *planning* and *organizing* skills. It also involves a certain degree of *strategic thinking* and, with it, lots of *patience*.

Empower

Lastly, the top portion of the illustration above suggests that empowering young people to make their lives fulfilling can involve working closely with them to identify and pursue jobs and career pathways that need their expertise or skills. This can work as a two-way street. Let's use the above example of skills associated with a love of hunting.



On the one hand, you can look for jobs and careers that require planning, organizing, strategic thinking, and patience.

On the other hand, you can empower the young person to make a current job or career pursuit more meaningful by assisting them in finding ways to intentionally add planning, organizing, strategic thinking, and patience to their work. Learning self-advocacy skills would be very helpful here. This process is called meaning-making.⁸

It's not about finding meaning in life, which can set a young person on a sometimes dangerous quest to find meaning in things outside themselves, some of which could be unhealthy. It's about *making* one's life meaningful based on who one is, which goes back to the first level of the illustration above. Lastly, as mentioned above, doing this is also a critical part of recovering from mental health difficulties.⁹

⁸ Crystal L. Park, "The Meaning Making Model: A Framework for Understanding Meaning, Spirituality, and Stress-Related Growth in Health Psychology," www.ehps.net/ehp, June 2013; Michael F. Steger, "Making Meaning in Life," *Psychological Inquiry*, 2012; Crystal L. Park, "Making Sense of the Meaning Literature: An Integrative Review of Meaning Making and Its Effects on Adjustment to Stressful Life Events," *Psychological Bulletin*, March 2010

⁹ Carol D. Ryff, "Self-Realization and Meaning Making in the Face of Adversity: A Eudaimonic Approach to Human Resilience," *J Psychol Afr.*, 2014