



# WELL-BEING:

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND LOGOTHERAPY



María Elena Garassini Chávez<sup>3</sup>

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3 Universidad UNICA Venezuelan Society of Positive Psychology / SOVEPPPOS.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9391-0879>

Email: [m.garassini@unica.edu.co](mailto:m.garassini@unica.edu.co)/[megarassini@gmail.com](mailto:megarassini@gmail.com)



## ABSTRACT

The study and promotion of well-being became very popular in the twentieth century. However, it is not a new topic; it has its roots in Greek philosophy, where thinkers discussed eudaimonia, a form of happiness derived from a good spirit, genius or consciousness (eu: good, daimon: spirit). Martin Seligman's speech as president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, where he pointed out that psychology as a science aims to both heal what is broken and promote the best of each person, led to the development of a corpus of research on human well-being, positive and virtuous aspects of behavior, known as positive psychology. According to positive psychology theory, well-being is comprised of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning in life and accomplishments, with a cross-cutting axis formed by character strengths. Logotherapy or therapy of meaning is as a form of existential analysis developed by Dr. Viktor Frankl based on his experiences as a prisoner of war in Nazi concentration camps. Frankl first introduced logotherapy in 1926 to an academic audience during a conference held at the Academic Association for Medical.



Psychology, founded by Fritz Wittels, Maximilian Silbermann and Frankl himself. Logotherapy involves a set of principles and techniques for therapeutic work, both individually and in groups, designed to awaken the individual's spiritual or noetic dimension, which remains healthy but can lie dormant. The core of logotherapy emphasizes the importance of a meaning in life for personal development, considering the development of values such as creation, experience and attitude, and the lack of meaning as a form of noogenic neurosis experienced by many people.

Positive psychology integrates the development of a meaning in life as a fourth element of well-being, and similarly, it includes this concept in its classification of character strengths under the virtue of transcendence, particularly represented in the strength of spirituality. The central approaches of positive psychology and logotherapy allow us to identify the meeting points between the two approaches and their contributions to the current understanding of well-being.

**Keywords:** well-being, positive psychology, logotherapy, character strengths, meaning in life.



## RESUMEN

El estudio y la promoción del bienestar ha tomado gran auge en el siglo XX, aunque no es un tema nuevo, ya que ha sido planteado desde los filósofos y pensadores griegos que hablaban de la eudaimonía entendida como la felicidad que proviene del buen espíritu, genio o conciencia (*eu: buen, daimon: espíritu*). El discurso de Martin Seligman como presidente de la Asociación Americana de Psicología (APA) en 1998, donde señala que la psicología como ciencia tiene como objetivo tanto curar lo que está roto como promover lo mejor de cada persona, dio nacimiento a un corpus de investigaciones referidas al bienestar humano, aspectos positivos y virtuosos de comportamiento que se denominó psicología positiva. La teoría del bienestar de la psicología positiva plantea que el bienestar está constituido por cinco elementos: emociones positivas, experiencias óptimas, relaciones interpersonales, sentido de vida y logros, y un eje transversal constituido por las fortalezas del carácter. La logoterapia o terapia del sentido considerada como una forma de análisis existencial, fue creada por el doctor Viktor Frankl tras sus vivencias como prisionero de guerra en los campos de concentración Nazi. Frankl habló por primera vez de logoterapia en 1926, ante un públi-



co académico durante una conferencia realizada en la Asociación Académica para la Psicología Médica, fundada por Fritz Wittels, Maximilian Silbermann y Frankl. La logoterapia posee una serie de principios y técnicas para el trabajo terapéutico en forma individual y grupal que buscan despertar en los individuos su dimensión espiritual o noética que nunca enferma, pero puede estar dormida. El centro de sus planteamientos refiere a la importancia del sentido de vida para un desarrollo pleno considerando el desarrollo de los valores de creación, experiencia y actitud, y la falta de sentido como la neurosis noógena, que viven muchas personas.

La psicología positiva integra el desarrollo del sentido de vida como cuarto elemento del bienestar y de igual manera lo integra en la clasificación de las fortalezas del carácter en la virtud de la trascendencia, particularmente representada en la fortaleza de la espiritualidad. Los planteamientos centrales de la psicología positiva, así como de la logoterapia nos permiten identificar los puntos de encuentro entre ambos así como los aportes de cada uno a la comprensión actual de bienestar.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar, psicología positiva, logoterapia, fortalezas del carácter, sentido de vida.

# INTRODUCTION

Learning about human well-being has become a prominent focus in the 21st century, particularly following Dr. Martin Seligman's 1998 statement as president of the American Psychological Association (APA). Seligman stated that his tenure would focus on a "more positive" psychology, one that would consider the study of human well-being alongside the study of pathologies and intelligence. Psychology should not only study disorders and weaknesses but also the potentials and virtues of human beings (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology is the scientific study of the healthy psyche, intended to counterbalance the traditional focus on the study of mental disorders and provide a theoretical framework for understanding the processes, conditions and mechanisms that describe a good life. It aims to expand beyond the traditional biomedical model inherited from medicine by studying psychological well-being, thus identifying, measuring and enhancing the promotion of a healthy life across various human contexts (Lupano and Castro, 2010).

When we delve into the conceptual foundations that gave rise to positive psychology, we find significant contributions from Viktor Frankl in logotherapy, humanist theories and emotional intelligence. All of them emphasize the importance of self-realization, finding the meaning in life and emotional management as fundamental aspects, like a compass that guides human development.

Taking up the core of positive psychology, which is the scientific study of well-being that fosters human flourishing through the elements outlined in the PERMA model—Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments—we see that finding meaning in life is regarded as one of the key sources of well-being within this conceptual framework. By presenting Viktor Frankl's theories on logotherapy, which inspired one of the pillars (Meaning) of the PERMA model, we not only gain a conceptual framework that offers valuable insights into the existential or spiritual dimension of human beings but also deepen our understanding of meaning in life as a source of well-being in the PERMA model of positive psychology.

The chapter will begin with a general overview of positive psychology. It will then move on to discuss logotherapy, and finally, the concept of meaning in life within the framework of positive psychology. To conclude, the chapter will offer some final reflections on the contributions of both conceptual frameworks to the contemporary study of well-being.

## HISTORY OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The history of positive psychology is a journey through the evolution of our understanding of the human being, encompassing physical, psychological, social and even spiritual dimensions. From the survival anxieties of early humans and their defense against threats to the existential concerns of the great thinkers of Athens, who grappled with fear and death, there has been a long-standing focus on understanding and addressing problems, painful aspects, and distress in human behavior.

The birth of medical sciences, philosophy, sociology, major religions and psychology as a science initially centered on the understanding of the human being from a negative or suffering perspective. Early psychology, therefore, focused on studying, explaining and aiding pathological behaviors and mental illnesses. The multiple theories and conceptual frameworks that emerged provided insights into the formation and functioning of the human psyche, as well as the causes and development of mental pathologies throughout different stages of life. Research in genetics, biochemistry, psychology and sociology contributed to the understanding of human behavior and the development of interventions through psychotherapy and pharmacological treatment.

In the 19th century, Western thought was grounded in the scientific paradigm of classical positivism, where experimental research was considered the preferred method of study. A key milestone in this era was the establishment of the first experimental psychology laboratory by Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig in 1879. Alongside the emphasis on experimental studies, the medical model for treating the body became prominent. Consequently, the treatment of mental illnesses mirrored this biomedical approach, with Sigmund Freud at the forefront of studying and treating women with hysteria (Gancedo, 2008).



Philosophy also provides significant insights into human nature, reflecting the prevailing considerations of its time. René Descartes, for example, proposed a dualistic view of humanity, where the mind and body were seen as distinct dimensions. Consequently, psychology was tasked with studying, intervening in and healing the psyche, just as medicine focused on the body (Gancedo, 2008).

The study of the potentialities and positive aspects of human behavior had not received much attention from the academic community, given the prevailing focus on mental illness, its study, treatment and intervention. Consequently, in the care of people affected by mental disorders, particularly in the aftermath of the world wars in the 20th century, their potentialities as a resource for recovery—both physically and psychologically—was often overlooked.

In his inaugural speech as president of the APA in 1998, Martin Seligman, after a thorough analysis of psychology as a science that studies the human being, identified three primary focuses: the study of pathologies and human suffering, the study of intelligence as a distinguishing human trait and the study of human potentialities to foster personal and collective well-being. In his speech, Seligman emphasized that psychology should address both the weaknesses and strengths—or the bright aspects—of human beings. He also stressed that people, even without any mental disorders, have a great capacity for recovery and integrity through discovering a positive dimension in critical situations. This recognition of a healthy and highly potential dimension within humans is inherited by positive psychology from logotherapy and Viktor Frankl's research. Developing a conceptual framework to fully understand and cultivate the potential of all individuals has been an ongoing challenge for psychology as a science (Seligman, 2002).

Historically, around the 1950s, the medical model began to show limitations and proved inadequate for addressing the societal challenges of the postwar era. This led to a broader debate on the concept of health and illness. In 1947, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a definition of health that transcended the mere absence of disease, defining it as a complete and integral state of well-being encompassing physical, mental, and social dimensions (Gancedo, 2008).

Parallel to WHO's emphasis on a comprehensive concept of health, during the 1950's and 1960s, humanist psychology proposed that the study of human beings should focus on meeting needs ranging from the most basic physical-biological aspects to social-relational and psychological-emotional spheres, ultimately enabling

individuals to achieve self-realization. In their conceptual frameworks, leading figures of this movements, such as Rogers (1993) and Maslow (1991), emphasized studying healthy populations, focusing on subjective experience, individual freedoms in making choices and the importance of personal meaning. The conscious use of personal resources was highlighted as a fundamental principle for effectively facing the challenges and difficulties that life presents.

The emergence of humanistic psychology marked the first step toward the so-called salutogenic approach, which shifts the focus of mental health to the development of psychological potential. This trend to consider and cultivate human potential has made significant contributions to psychotherapy practice. Additionally, in the field of social sciences, due to its relevance to its object of study, it also left its mark on existential philosophy and phenomenological methods. However, this legacy did not make a more substantial impact on academia due to the strong influence of traditional empirical science (Arancibia et al., 2000).

The consolidation of the salutogenic approach in medicine, social sciences and psychology emerged in the 1980s, developing the principle of health promotion. In psychology, research and applications began to explore the concept of health and its promotion, leading to a growing emphasis on health psychology. This field focuses on studying the health-disease continuum and integrates the salutogenic model. Thus, psychology as a science started to show interest and integrate studies related to human potentialities and their development. Research on attachment (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1986), psychological well-being (Diener, 1994; Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff & Singer, 1998), creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; De Bono, 2008; Sternberg, 1997), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996; Steiner, 2002), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1998), and resilience (Cyrulnik, 2007), among others, provides evidence of the growing interest in studying positive human characteristics.

The body of research on human potential has shown how the development and promotion of human well-being act as cushions against psychological pathologies and as drivers of holistic health that permeates the physical, psychological and social spheres of human development. Examining the impact of studying positive factors, even beyond these two dimensions, it becomes clear that cultivating human qualities, virtues, and strengths can serve as resources for coping with adversity and trauma. This approach informs treatment and rehabilitation strategies that enhance psychological capital and improve overall quality of life (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Ryff and Singer, 2007; Seligman, 2002; Vásquez and Hervás, 2009).

The principles of health prevention and promotion, derived from the thorough scientific study of human potential (Ryff and Singer, 2007), as well as treatment and rehabilitation (Vázquez and Hervás, 2009), guide the research direction of the salutogenic model's scientific production. These models have also led to the development of training programs in both international and national contexts (Cabrera and Caldas, 2019; Norrish et al., 2013).

## WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Positive psychology, or the science of well-being, is the scientific study of human potential or positive aspects. Its focus on knowledge and empowerment aims to foster subjective well-being and provides an ideal conceptual framework for health promotion. This approach, which emphasizes the study of positive traits (potential, strengths or virtues) rather than merely focusing on illness, is known as a salutogenic approach.

All findings and insights into human potential, emerging from the salutogenic model, have proven valuable for designing effective interventions. Thus, understanding psychological resources and personal strengths, as well as promoting their development, has become the responsibility of educators, parents, coaches and companies (Delle Fave et al., 2009).

In the early 20th century, positive psychology and the three foundational pillars of well-being (human strengths, positive emotions and positive institutions) laid the groundwork for the salutogenic approach (Seligman, 2002). Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, introduced the concept of happiness as enduring happiness, referring to the happiness formula proposed by researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky:

$$H = S + C + V$$

In this formula, “H” represents enduring happiness, “S” refers to the set point for happiness, influenced by genetics (inheritance), “C” refers to life circumstances (where control and manipulation are relatively limited) and “V” indicates voluntary activities. Studies have shown that the “V” factor has the greatest impact on how we perceive well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2002).

In the early 21st century, research into human well-being began to unveil fascinating discoveries: individuals who experience happiness tend to live longer and enjoy

better health. In the workplace, they are more productive and valued. Physically, they handle pain more effectively, are more attentive to their health and safety and their positive emotions help offset negative ones. Similarly, happy people tend to be more sociable and have better interpersonal relationships (friends, partners and social groups), experience less loneliness and demonstrate a greater capacity for altruism, focusing less on themselves (Seligman, 2002). Additionally, they exhibit greater wisdom, a willingness to be curious and a joy in learning, which helps them make significant life decisions (Aspinwall, L. G., & Brunhart, S. M. 2000; Seligman, 2002).

The integration of humanist theories into this emerging field of well-being, or positive psychology, including Frankl's insights on the meaning in life, has illuminated the notion that fostering well-being involves engaging deeply with life's details, personal growth, and dedicating to something greater than oneself—whether that be a cause, another person or a significant pursuit (Frankl, 1963).

In considering these principles, positive psychology initially proposed cultivating three essential pillars for achieving happiness: the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2002).

The “pleasant life” is developed by nurturing positive emotions—pleasures and gratifications—across past, present and future experiences. The “engaged life” is achieved by creating flow in activities where our strengths are used to take on challenges. Finally, the “meaningful life” is cultivated by employing our most developed strengths to achieve goals that go beyond personal interests and contribute to the greater good.

In his 2011 publication, *Flourish*, Martin Seligman expands upon the theory of well-being within positive psychology by introducing five elements and a central axis: character strengths. The focus of the study shifts from mere happiness to the core of positive psychology—well-being. The gold standard for measuring well-being is personal growth and the goal of positive psychology is to increase such growth. Through his mission to disseminate the implications of positive psychology for the full development of individuals, Seligman employs the metaphor of plant care and flourishing, paralleling it with the identification and utilization of human potential for fostering well-being.

Martin Seligman's theory of well-being, encapsulated in the PERMA model, identifies five essential elements that individuals should recognize and cultivate in a personalized manner to achieve true well-being (Seligman, 2011). These elements are Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement.

- **Positive emotions:** These are the psychophysiological responses we experience in reaction to external and internal events we perceive and value as pleasurable. Positive emotions, such as joy and interest, broaden our range of actions and complement negative emotions, like fear and anger, which help us respond to perceived threats and aid our survival. Recognizing and consciously enjoying positive emotions promotes well-being and mitigates the disruptive effects of negative emotions.
- **Engagement:** This refers to the state of being fully absorbed in an activity that challenges us and for which we possess the necessary skills. It involves using our strengths and achieving flow states, similar to positive emotions, which can be cultivated in various ways. Engagement occurs in activities where we excel and become increasingly skilled, such as sports, music, manual tasks, reading, or cooking. During these flow states, our perception of time becomes subjective, and we experience a profound sense of satisfaction, marking an optimal experience.
- **Relationships:** Interpersonal relationships based on healthy interdependence and mutual support are key sources of well-being. Healthy and secure relationships allow us to enjoy the company of others, deepen connections, negotiate and align expectations with each interaction. For many positive psychology scholars, nurturing interpersonal relationships is central to life and human growth because we are inherently social and interdependent beings.
- **Meaning:** Seeking the common good by contributing through our strengths fosters well-being and cultivates a meaning in life. This element is associated with the experience of being part of and serving something greater than oneself. When our actions leave a lasting legacy in any aspect of life, we experience the well-being associated with the meaning in life.
- **Accomplishment:** It relates to the pursuit of goals through perseverance and determination. It is based on the idea that people strive for success, performance and execution for their intrinsic value. It involves the persistent effort individuals make to achieve a goal that interests them and allows for personal growth.

Human strengths are the cross-cutting axis of the PERMA theory; they are the resources we have to enhance ourselves, grow and contribute. According to some scholars, character strengths are our psychological capital, our beliefs about ourselves, others,

and how the world operates. These personal resources are essential for navigating daily life and tackling new challenges. The implementation of strengths is evident in our ability to work as a team, our desire to learn, humility, perseverance, sense of humor, creativity and curiosity, among others. They enable us to solve problems and make contributions within the human systems where we operate: work, family, friends, neighbors and community.

## LOGOTHERAPY

Logotherapy, the third Viennese school of psychotherapy after Freud's psychoanalysis and Adlerian psychology, is more of an existential-humanistic approach or attitude and a complement to psychotherapy than a distinct school of thought. The therapeutic method of logotherapy directs individuals to become aware of their fundamental responsibility concerning their unique life's mission, to which they are called to respond personally based on their freedom. According to Frankl, humans have an anthropological unity within ontological multiplicity: the body (biological or physiological dimension, "life"), psyche (psychological or sociological dimension, "life consciousness") and spirit (spiritual or noetic dimension, "will to find meaning in life"). The spiritual dimension is specifically human and essential, encompassing and expanding the physical and psychological dimensions (Luna, 2015).

Logotherapy, or the therapy of meaning, is grounded in existential analysis and emerged from Viktor Frankl's exploration of noogenic neuroses—those caused by a loss of meaning in life. This therapeutic approach carries significant philosophical weight, focusing on the search for meaning in life in the face of existential vacuum. This existential vacuum, resulting from the failure to awaken the noogenic or noetic dimension of the individual (a dimension that, while not susceptible to illness, can be obscured, hidden, or dormant), is responsible for psychological, emotional and physical symptoms. Frankl's work reflects the influence of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Husserl, who contributed to his development of the therapy of meaning.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1998), health encompasses physical, psychological, social and spiritual-transcendental domains. From this perspective, considering the domain of spiritual-transcendental well-being as a factor impacting health encourages us to revisit and integrate logotherapy's emphasis on the importance of meaning in life and spirituality.

Embracing life's challenges with a "yes" implies that life can have meaning despite the adversities one encounters. Frankl posits that this search for meaning, which constitutes the vital drive, is the engine of existence, complementing the ideas of his predecessors who emphasized pleasure and power in human motivation. Individuals can always exercise their freedom to some extent by choosing their response to life's adversities. As Fabry (1977, cited by Luna, 2015) explains, logotherapy is founded on three principles: life has meaning in every circumstance; individuals possess a will to find meaning and feel frustrated or empty when unable to exercise it; and people are free, within their circumstances, to realize their meaning in life.

Meaning is discovered; it already exists as part of human nature, but it is relative and subjective, referring to the unique experience of each individual. Therefore, this meaning is valid only for that person. When meaning is not discovered or remains dormant, human suffering finds a fertile ground.

## HUMAN THEORY: SUFFERING AND MEANING

According to Viktor Frankl, humans have three dimensions: the somatic or physical, the mental or psychic and the noogenic or spiritual. When the spiritual dimension remains undeveloped, it creates a fertile ground for psychological disorders. To lead a fulfilling life that promotes and integrates the noetic dimension of human existence, Frankl suggests cultivating three types of values that lead to meaning and, consequently, human well-being: the values of creation, associated with work and contributing to society, values of experience (derived from relationships with others and sensory experiences) and values of attitude, related to resilience and overcoming suffering. The presence of this trilogy of values in one's life enables coping with existential despair and strengthens human capacity for responsibility and freedom in making life choices. For Frankl, mental pathologies come from the meaning we assign to suffering, which can often be unavoidable, rather than the discomfort itself. This principle, which is the core of the logotherapeutic concept of tragic optimism, counters the reductionism of behaviorism (Luna, 2015).

Frankl believed that death could enrich the meaning of our lives. If we lived forever, we would keep postponing each act indefinitely. The awareness that life has limits

can be used as motivation to make the most of each situation and live it more fully. In logotherapy, a certain degree of conflict in our daily activities is seen as positive. The search for meaning can arise from some internal tension, rather than always from a balance state. This tension occurs between what has already been achieved and what remains to be obtained, thereby stimulating us to seek more challenges. Life is always a challenge that will bring tensions, presenting us with the personal challenge of finding meaning (Alvez, 2013).

On the other hand, expanding on the topic of suffering, Frankl argues that not all psychological problems or pains can be therapeutically eliminated. Some must be endured, and the more one understands the “why” behind them, and thus finds a “for what,” the better one can endure them. To do this, there must be something—a loved one or a task to complete—that needs us, and out of love for this, one can accept great pain. This is described as a courageous attitude toward inevitable suffering, thanks to not being alone in the world and finding meaning in pain. In our society, there is a compulsive search for happiness that prevents exploring growth and increasing tolerance for the frustration that pain can bring (Luna, 2015).

## TYPES OF NEUROSIS ACCORDING TO FRANKL

In his study of individuals and the role that meaning plays in their lives, Frankl described various types of neuroses based on their causes. Among these, the noogenic neurosis stands out as a central focus in logotherapy (Luna, 2015).

### NOOGENIC NEUROSIS

Noogenic neurosis is the primary reason for seeking help from logotherapists. It arises when individuals experience a loss of meaning in life, leading to existential vacuum. This type of neurosis results from the dissatisfaction of the noogenic or spiritual dimension of a person. Hopelessness and loss of meaning occur when individuals fail to find meaning in their suffering, thus leading to the development of noogenic neuroses.



## COLLECTIVE NEUROSIS

In modern life, people in large cities share the same belief systems that shape their culture and face a common historical reality that challenges them, leading to what are known as collective neuroses. These collective neuroses can manifest in attitudes that can be grouped into four types: conformity, characterized by adhering to the behavior of the majority and collectivist thinking; fatalism, where all events are attributed to external causes with no exercise of freedom and responsibility; fanaticism, where the group idealizes its own beliefs from a fundamentalist stance and is intolerant of others; and lack of future orientation, where there is an indifferent attitude toward reality, focusing solely on immediate needs.

## SUNDAY NEUROSIS AND VACATION NEUROSIS

The constant occupation of time and the importance of having a life filled with achievements characterize modern humans. This results in work and daily tasks leading to exhaustion. During periods of leisure or lower demand, such as weekends and particularly Sundays, individuals may experience feelings of inadequacy, apathy or even existential vacuum, which are referred to in logotherapy as Sunday neurosis.

When extended periods of an individual's usual activities are absent, resulting in a prolonged form of Sunday neurosis, it manifests as vacation neurosis. This is typically caused by the loss of work, maternity leave or any activity that previously filled a person's time, leading to feelings of uselessness and apathy due to the absence of life challenges.



## **OTHER NEUROSES: PSYCHOGENIC, REACTIVE, SOMATOGENIC AND PSYCHOSOMATIC**

Psychogenic neuroses are classified based on their origins: reactive neuroses arise from psychological factors such as beliefs and attitudes, and are a response of the organism to the presence of somatic or psychological symptoms; psychosomatic neuroses are characterized by physical symptoms caused by psychological factors (e.g., asthma); and somatogenic neuroses result from biological dysfunctions, such as hyperthyroidism or excessive nervous system reactivity, and meaning in life in positive psychology.

According to Alves (2013), positive psychology and logotherapy share the common goal of enhancing human potential. Both approaches emphasize consciousness (although the unconscious is important, it does not hold as much relevance as it does in psychoanalysis). Logotherapy refers to the spiritual unconscious, an inherent aspect of human beings that never becomes ill and can always be redeemed, even in the most adverse situations.

Positive psychology and logotherapy focus on prevention, taking care of individuals before difficulties and conflicts arise and highlighting each person's potential. In the 1930s, Viktor Frankl was a pioneer in establishing youth counseling centers that addressed existential issues. Martin Seligman coordinates a Positive Psychology Network made up of three centers founded in the early 21st century to support human well-being with scientific studies: the Center for the Study of Positive Emotions, the Center for the Study of Positive Personality and the Center for the Study of Positive Institutions (Alves, 2013).

Both approaches work from the healthy aspects of individuals. For Frankl, it is self-transcendence; for Seligman, it is his theory of well-being with its five pillars and the overarching concept of character strengths. Seligman suggests that a meaningful life is one that contributes to something greater than ourselves, and the higher that something is, the more meaningful our existence becomes. He also emphasizes how

positive emotions and improved connections with others foster a sense of service, allowing us to find meaning and purpose in life.

In positive psychology's PERMA model of well-being, transcendence plays a fundamental role in human flourishing. Transcendence involves considering that life has a purpose beyond our personal scenario, extending to an object of inspiration that gives life meaning and seeks to benefit others. The objects of inspiration can vary widely: ecology, nature, God, family, a political cause, an artistic or social project, among others, but they are all characterized by their focus on the common good. This is where the famous phrase of positive psychology co-founder Christopher Peterson, "Other people matter," gains significance. Other people matter because, through our strengths, we can contribute to their well-being and leave a legacy. The other, who is different from me, complements me, and I complement them.

The construction of meaning in life begins in adolescence and continues throughout adulthood (Fry, 1998, as cited by Góngora and Castro Solano, 2011). The creation of meaning is related to the development of each person in conjunction with other vital processes such as relationships, life goals and identity (Steger, 2009).

Michael Steger (2009) is the author who, within the framework of positive psychology, has focused on studying the meaning in life. According to positive psychology, the meaning in life develops through the conscious use of our strengths, which allow us to grow, value ourselves and contribute to the common good. Steger suggests that people find meaning in their lives when their actions transcend the immediate present and project into the future. For most people, there are several important sources of meaning in their lives: spirituality, work and close personal relationships. These findings are also presented by Emmons (2003), an expert in gratitude who has also studied the meaning in life. Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) emphasize the importance of a meaning in life for living a fulfilling life. One of the special characteristics of humans is the ability to live virtuously and find purpose in life while acknowledging the importance of pleasure and its combination with meaning.

The "spiritual" dimension that drives the search for meaning is as intrinsic to human beings as the physical dimension. Among other things, it provides us with the capacity for "faith," a belief system that allows us to introspect and relate to others through mutual contribution. Spirituality and health care must be developed in a balanced way as nourishment for the meaning in our lives.

# TECHNIQUES OF LOGOTHERAPY

Faced with the existential vacuum experienced by individuals, the goal of logotherapy is to help the patient find meaning in their life. According to Frankl, the logotherapist should use the following techniques (Martínez, 2013).

## **SOCRATIC DIALOGUE**

Socratic dialogues are compared to the work of midwives who assist others in giving birth to something important and essential to them. Socratic dialogue occurs within existential communication and involves the skillful use of questioning to support and challenge the speaker's narrative regarding the events they are experiencing. In some cases, it is necessary to challenge the interpretations based on the individual's beliefs through what are called naive questions.

## **DE-REFLECTION**

For some people, cognitive rumination of their problems causes anxiety, disturbing and even paralyzing their daily lives. Excessive self-focus or “navel- gazing” is known in logotherapy as “hyper-intention,” and the repeated focusing on problems is termed “hyper-reflection.” These issues are addressed using the technique of de-reflection, which involves shifting attention to other actions that utilize the person's potential, promote altruistic behavior and generate positive emotions that cultivate experience or enjoyment.

## **CONFRONTATION**

The confrontation technique, used across many forms of psychotherapy, addresses behaviors generally rooted in social conditioning. It involves presenting questions to the individual that allow them to understand the incongruence or excessive concern in their behavior in certain contexts or with certain people. This technique helps rec-

ognize patterns so that the person can become aware of them and work towards modification.

## PARADOXICAL INTENT

Paradoxical intention is a technique in logotherapy that focuses on the symptom presented by the person, encouraging them to voluntarily and consciously intensify its appearance until its function becomes meaningless. In this way, when an event that usually causes anxiety occurs, such associated consequences do not occur. The development of humor is one indicator that the technique will be more effective in helping people confront their fears. It has been used for disorders such as fear of public speaking and insomnia.

The logotherapist encourages the patient to broaden their perspective and discover other viewpoints, making all possible meanings and principles conscious and visible to them. Rather than imposing their own ideas, the logotherapist allows the patient to search for these on their own. This helps the patient move away from hyper-reflection, providing an alternative to repetitive thinking about their problems. The logotherapist develops strong relational and dialogical skills, enabling them to guide the patient in reflecting and finding attitudes to cope with the events in their life.



# CONCLUSIONS

## FINAL REFLECTIONS: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND LOGOTHERAPY

After presenting both positive psychology and logotherapy, it becomes evident how these conceptual frameworks facilitate the current study of well-being. They also highlight Frankl's contributions regarding meaning in life to understanding and developing the spiritual or noetic dimension of human beings, allowing us to delve into this fourth element (*meaning*), integrated into the PERMA theory of well-being of positive psychology.

The topic of spirituality, considered by logotherapy as the noogenic dimension of human beings, is central to Frankl's theories. This dimension guides existence and, at the same time, results in noogenic neurosis when we fail to use our freedom to find meaning in our lives through actions for a cause, experiences with others or ourselves or our attitudes toward adversity. Similarly, the core techniques of logotherapy promote the development of consciousness, freedom, will, attitude toward suffering, potential, sources of meaning and self-transcendence through giving to others.

In the case of the theory of well-being of positive psychology, it offers a framework with five elements (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments) and transversal axis (character strengths) that promote well-being. In this model, spirituality is considered a character strength and one of the five pillars of the PERMA theory of well-being. As a character strength, it is seen as an emblem within the virtue of transcendence, characterized by individuals who have coherent beliefs about the purpose and meaning of their actions in the world. The theory posits that there is an ultimate meaning in life, referring to the belief and commitment to the transcendental (non-material) aspects of life that shape behavior and provide

comfort to those who possess this strength. Similarly, the meaning in life as one of the five pillars of the PERMA theory suggests that well-being can be cultivated by finding **meaning** in our lives, developing awareness and will and considering that life with meaning is our contribution to the common good. This involves the conscious use of our most developed strengths and contributing them to a cause beyond ourselves. Thus, we see how this spiritual (noogenic) dimension that Frankl emphasizes as central to his logotherapy approach has been recognized as an element that promotes well-being in positive psychology.

From a macro perspective, Alvez (2013) suggests that positive psychology and logotherapy share aspects related to their objects of study and their conception of the human being, such as the enhancement of human potential and the emphasis on awareness. For Frankl, awareness is the organ of meaning, and spirituality is not only a dimension of human beings but a specific and central one. For Seligman, identifying and becoming aware of one's own resources, understood as the elements and transversal axis of the PERMA theory of well-being, facilitates human flourishing. Both positive psychology and logotherapy also focus on prevention, not just solving problems when they arise but considering the potential of each person for their full development and using resources when facing adversity, enabling the development of resilience.

Both approaches consider the healthy aspects of human beings. From Frankl's perspective, it is self-transcendence through giving to others; from Seligman's view, it is his theory of well-being with its five pillars and the importance of contributing to the common good through our strengths. Seligman states that a life with meaning is one that contributes to the common good, and the higher the contribution, the greater the meaning of our existence. Positive emotions promote connection with others, help find a vocation of service and illuminate the path to the meaning and purpose of our lives. Positive emotions that create meaning include love, compassion, hope, wonder, gratitude, trust and joy. Giving and receiving love allows us to feel important and effective. Commitment and compassion create satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. The essence of finding meaning in our lives is to share with others, to learn to appreciate what others see as good in us, our strengths. In Viktor Frankl's words, finding meaning in our lives enables us to self-transcend (Alvez, 2013).

If we revisit the idea from the theory of well-being of positive psychology that the meaning in life is our contribution to the common good, based on our potentials and strengths, and combine it with the contributions of logotherapy, which identifies

three types of values leading to meaning and, thus, happiness—namely the values of creation, related to work and societal contribution; the values of experience, associated with interactions with others and sensory experiences that enable enjoyment; and the values of attitude, which have to do with overcoming suffering—we can provide people with the opportunity to analyze their lives in terms of their actions to contribute to others, enjoy life and be resilient in the face of adversity.

The main techniques used in logotherapy or meaning therapy (Socratic dialogue, de-reflection, confrontation and paradoxical intention), as described in this chapter, are excellent tools for generating reflections on our worldviews and awareness of our resources. It is worth studying these techniques so that, whether in group settings or personal work, we can be more proactive in managing our well-being based on the contributions of the theory of well-being of positive psychology.



This fusion and complementary use of logotherapy techniques and well-being elements can serve as excellent tools for achieving full development, fostering a proactive and learning-oriented attitude in the face of adversity and valuing our contributions to the world to lead a life with meaning.



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