

## Module 8: Meaning



**Subject:** Psychological Well-being

**Duration of Unit:** 2 classes (45 mins each)

**Central Message:** People who see their lives endowed with meaning and purpose experience greater happiness and stronger resilience to depression.



### LEARNING GOALS

#### Enduring Understandings:

- The pursuit of meaningful goals promotes greater happiness and self-efficacy as well as resilience to suffering.
- The meaningful life is achieved by employing signature strengths for a greater purpose, as well as self-improvement.
- Setting meaningful goals, ie goals that we think are valuable, is a significant step in that direction.

#### Essential Questions:

- Why is a sense of meaning and purpose in life associated with greater happiness?
- How does one find greater meaning?
- What is the link between self-efficacy (confidence that you can achieve your goals) and happiness?

#### Learning Outcomes:

Students will acquire the skills to:

- Explain various ways in which a meaningful life is a happier life
- Explain how the ability to set goals (that they perceive to be valuable) contributes to their happiness
- Describe how goal setting contributes to their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy
- Use the “Ikigai” framework to revisit and reframe their goals

## LESSON PLAN OUTLINE

### Day 1 Main Topic – Goal Setting

- **Assignment Debrief:** Break students into pairs. Give each member of the pair five minutes to talk about their experience with the Ikigai challenge. Some prompts:
  - Whom did they work with?
  - Were they surprised by something?
  - Did they obtain new ideas from the experience? (10 mins)
- **Watch the video on Meaning** (10 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a class discussion about the video. Some prompts:
  - General reflection
  - How is goal setting related to finding meaning?
  - What does Frankl mean by his famous quote, “Life can be pulled by goals as surely as it can be pushed by drives?” (5 mins)
- **Writing activity**  
Write notes about a book or movie that seems related to the idea of meaning. Prompts: for example, think about a plot that includes unusual or amazing goals that people strive to attain (10 mins)
- **Class Discussion**
  - How does each book or movie deal with the idea of finding meaning or meaninglessness?
  - What did you learn from it? (10 mins)
- **Assignment:** Watch the movie “Groundhog Day” and write notes on the following questions:
  - Why do you think Phil Connors (Bill Murray) is so mean and cynical at the beginning of the movie?
  - How do his motives change during the movie?
  - How is the movie related to the topic of meaning and happiness?

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## Day 2 Main Topic – The Meaningful Life

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- **Assignment Debrief:** Have students break into pairs and share their reflections on the “Groundhog Day” questions. (10 mins)
- **Class Discussion:**
  - Read the section on Viktor Frankl in the “History of Happiness.”
  - <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/viktor-frankl/>
  - Hold a discussion on the question, “Why is there a strong relationship between ‘meaninglessness’ and dysfunctional behavior, including addiction and depression?” (10 mins)
- **In-Class Reading (video prep)**
  - Read through the extraordinary story of Ma Li and Zhai Xiaowei on the following page:  
<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/personal-transformation-ensuing-happiness/> (10 mins)
- **Video**
  - Watch the video of their prize-winning performance on the same page. Note: Mention to students that the dance itself tells their story, including the enormous challenges they faced as they struggled to achieve their dreams (10 mins)
- **Group Discussion:** Students meet in small groups to reflect on the story of Ma and Zhai. Use the following prompts:
  - General reflection
  - How does the story reflect the teachings of Viktor Frankl about discovering meaning and happiness through suffering? (5 mins)
- **Assignment:**

Take the Happiness Soup Quiz.  
Find a recent review (preferably a systematic review) related to life skills (or depression) and well-being on Google Scholar or PubMed. Pick a life skill that interests you such as improving relationships or nutrition, and don’t forget to use the scientific keywords “subjective wellbeing” and “psychological wellbeing.” NOTE: remind students how they can filter the results to focus on reviews or systematic reviews.

## ASSESSMENT

### Summative Assessment:

*Student Mental Health Toolkit: Advanced Certificate Course for Educators*

- Students submit their **Weekly Happiness Habits Journal** and include their Gratitude, Mindfulness, and Hope goals along with all previous others.