

## Man's Search For Meaning - May 2020

What did you already know about this book's subject before you read this book?

### Questions for the Foreword & Preface

Why does he call his book success "an expression of misery of our time"?

What does he mean by "for success, like happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue"

How would you have made that impossible choice he faced when he found out his visa was ready (staying or leaving)?

His definition of success "insert" do you agree?

### Questions for Experiences in a Concentration Camp

Which of the 3 phases that he describes were most shocking to you?

- admission into camp
- well into the camp or
- after liberation

Pg. 40 he says: "...I was struggling to find the reason for my sufferings, my slow dying. [...] I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious "Yes" in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose." Would you say that might be a spiritual awakening/calling?

What do you think of the term "separating of the mind from the body" after reading this book?

If you had had the opportunity to meet Viktor, what would you have said to him?

Why do you think this book has been so popular?

## Questions for part 2:

What new things did you learn?

Pg. 99 he says: "Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life ... it must and can be fulfilled by him alone" - how do you take that into your own life?

Pg. 102 he says: "...suffering may well be a human achievement, especially if the suffering grows out of existential frustration". He also speaks of suffering well - what do you make of that?

Pg. 106 - the existential vacuum, do you ever find yourself trapped between distress and boredom?

Pg. 106 - Among his American students 60% marked a degree of existential vacuum, compared to 25% European - why is that?

Pg.108 - the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day, from hour to hour - what do you make of that? Also page 111 the meaning of life always changes, but never ceases to be.

What is the meaning of this very moment?

Pg. 110 - The meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man's own psyche. What does he mean by this?

Do you agree for yourself this is how you find meaning? Either 1) creating work, 2) experiencing something/someone and 3) our attitude towards suffering

The role of the therapist pg. 116 - more and more a psychiatrist is approached today by patients who confront him with human problems rather than neurotic symptoms. Would you also agree with that? (Especially after reading Maybe You Should Talk to Someone).

"Having been is the surest kind of being" would you agree with this statement?

Do you actualize yourself based on conditions or decisions?

### **Questions for the Postscript and Afterword:**

He says man must have a reason to be happy, must have a reason to laugh. What's your reason to be happy?

What is your reason to keep going on?

Can anyone relate to the "unemployment neurosis" he describes?

What do you think about the fact that we won't know the meaning until it's over (the movie analogy on page 143-144)

Do you agree that America has an imposed "be happy" trend? (further described earlier in the book on page 114)

When you hear more about his life (friends with Freud, being a gifted child etc.) Does it surprise you the strength he has displayed throughout his life?

What would you like to take with you from this book?

What questions do you still have?

## What are some of the quotes/sayings that have stayed with you?

- "An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior." pg. 20
- "At such a moment it is not the physical pain which hurts the most... it is the mental agony caused by the injustice, the unreasonableness of it all." pg. 23
- "Every single step became real torture" pg. 27
- "Those who have not gone through a similar experience can hardly conceive of the soul-destroying mental conflict and clashes of will power which a famished man experiences." pg. 31
- "Sensitive people... They were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom." pg. 36
- "Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise." Pg. 37
- "The truth - that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire" pg. 37
- "Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved, it finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self/ Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance." Pg. 38
- "Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation." pg. 43
- "We were grateful for the smallest of mercies... The meager pleasures of camp life provided a kind of negative happiness - "freedom from suffering"..." pg. 47
- "...proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" pg. 66
- "It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful" pg. 67
- "If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering... Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete" pg. 67
- "...the most depressing influence of all was the prisoner could not know how long his term of imprisonment would be. He had been given no date for his release" Pg. 70