

THE MEANING IN LIFE EVALUATION (MILE) SCALE

Directions: The following list of twenty values is summarized from answers given by a large sample of individuals who were asked which values they most want in life. You can easily determine which are most important and which are insignificant to you by the following rating technique. It should be noted that you cannot make an accurate evaluation merely by ranking the values in order of importance in your life, because often we get tangled up in what we have been taught about how we ought to regard them and thus fail to see how we really do feel about them. But the rating technique to be described will avoid to a considerable degree this problem by making you think much more deeply about each value, not just in terms of its meaning in relation to all other values. The final result will be a more accurate appraisal of the things that you want most and least out of life, and on the basis of this knowledge you can evaluate how well potential activities fit your needs

Opposite each other twenty values, you are to tabulate (in the same fashion that recorded scores in dominoes, one line for each point) the number of times you would choose this value in comparison with each of the other values. For example, starting with "wealth," you first compare it with "lasting friendships." If you would prefer wealth to lasting friendships, you tabulate one point for wealth. Next you compare wealth with "physical sex," the third value on the list. If you would prefer wealth, you tabulate another point opposite wealth; if you would prefer physical sex, you would record a point opposite physical sex. Then compare wealth with "a good name" in the same fashion, and so on until you have covered all twenty values. The result now will be a score for wealth ranging from a minimum of zero to a maximum of nineteen.

Next you take "lasting friendships" and compare this value with all other values.* Every time you choose lasting friendships rather than another value, you record a point for lasting friendships. Every time you choose another value you tally a point for that value. Again, the score can range from zero to nineteen. Then you repeat the process, taking next physical sex and comparing it with each value below it in the list; and so on with the entire list. Your final comparison is no. 19 with no. 20.

Your highest-rated values will be those to emphasize in any life activity; the lowest value will be those to avoid.

You may think that, if you have some of the values, you would automatically have many others. For example, you might feel wealth would bring a number of the others. But rate each value as if it were independent of all others. You might feel that wealth would afford you physical sex, but comparing the two, assume that independent.

*Starting with physical sex, the next value down the list. Notice that you do not return to wealth at the top of the list, for you have already made that comparison.

After you have rated each value and tabulated the results, there is an important consideration in using them. You might find that you have among your high values no. 15--To be happy, and no. 18--Peace of mind, and you may feel that if you have these, all important others would automatically be included.

Actually it is just the reverse: if you have the things that offer a real meaning in life; happiness and peace of mind will follow as by-products. Logotherapy teaches that happiness and similar goals can never be successfully sought as ends in themselves; they occur only when we cease to concentrate on them and work instead toward a worthwhile purpose that

fills our lives with a sense of personal significance and identity. It is only when we extend ourselves by going beyond our own selfish interests, only when we extend ourselves the world of others around us, when we lose ourselves in pursuit of goals that make us valuable to others, that we really sense our own self-value as personal worth in a way that produces the warm glow of happiness and peace of mind.

So, if you have fallen into the trap of placing too high a priority on happiness and other values of personal satisfaction as goals to be sought in themselves, now is the time to rethink your way through the real meaning of your life and to zero in on those values that can truly work in the quest for happiness--those values that are in and of themselves aimed, not at your own happiness, but rather at the happiness of others who are significant in your life.

Source: CRUMBAUGH, JAMES C., LOGOTHERAPY: NEW HELP FOR PROBLEM DRINKERS, 1980, CHICAGO, HALL PUBLISHERS, PP. 105-108.