

Meaning, Purpose, and Health: Research Findings and What They Might Mean to You

Kevin S. Masters, PhD

Meaning, Purpose, and Health: From Research to You

Professor of Psychology

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Anschutz Health and Wellness Center



University of Colorado **Denver** | **Anschutz Medical Campus**

Thank You

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No conflicts of interest to disclose



Overview

- Meaning as studied in health psychology and social science
- Evidence regarding meaning and physical health and wellness
- Evidence regarding meaning and psychological health and wellness
- Pathways for psychological factors (meaning) to influence health and wellness
- Meaning salience – i.e., awareness in the moment of what is meaningful to you
- What do people find meaningful?
- What does any of this have to do with You (and Me)?



What is Life Meaning?

Typically, three components:

1. Meaningful life has purpose (goals)
2. Meaningful life matters or has significance
3. Meaningful life makes sense to the person living it, is comprehensible, predictable.

Heintzelman & King, 2014;
George & Park, 2016;
Steger, 2009



What is Life Meaning?

“Meaning provides us with the sense that our lives matter, that they make sense, and that they are more than the sum of our seconds, days, and years.”

Steger, 2012



But Does Meaning Matter for Health and Wellness?

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

World Health Organization, 1948



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World Health Organization, 1948



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

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SYSTEMATIC REVIEW/META-ANALYSIS

Purpose in Life and Its Relationship to All-Cause Mortality and Cardiovascular Events: A Meta-Analysis

Randy Cohen, MD, MS, Chirag Bavishi, MD, MPH, and Alan Rozanski, MD

ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the net impact of purpose in life on all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events.

Methods: The electronic databases PubMed, Embase, and PsycINFO were systematically searched through June 2015 to identify all studies investigating the relationship between purpose in life, mortality, and cardiovascular events. Articles were selected for inclusion if, a) they were prospective, b) evaluated the association between some measure of purpose in life and all-cause mortality and/or cardiovascular events, and c) unadjusted and/or adjusted risk estimates and confidence intervals (CIs) were reported.

Results: Ten prospective studies with a total of 136,265 participants were included in the analysis. A significant association was observed between having a higher purpose in life and reduced all-cause mortality (adjusted pooled relative risk = 0.83 [95% CI, 0.77-0.91]).

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Meaning in life and physical health: systematic review and meta-analysis 2 / 33 175%

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VOL. 11, NO. 4, 387-418
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2017.1327325>

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Meaning in life and physical health: systematic review and meta-analysis

Katarzyna Czekierda^a, Anna Banik^a, Crystal L. Park^b and Aleksandra Luszczynska^{a,c}

^aPsychology Department in Wrocław, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Wrocław, Poland; ^bDepartment of Psychology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, USA; ^cTrauma, Health, and Hazards Center, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO, USA

ABSTRACT
This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to clarify the associations between meaning in life and physical health using random-effects models. Conceptualisation of meaning (order in world vs. purpose in life), type of health indicators, participants' health status, and age issues were investigated as moderators. Systematic searches of six databases

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 14 October 2016
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KEYWORDS
Meaning in life; health; meta-

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But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Cohen, Bavashi, & Rozanski (2016)

Meta-analysis

10 prospective studies – total of 136,265 participants

Followed on average 7.3 years



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Higher meaning predicted lower all-cause mortality

(RR = 0.83 [CI=0.75-0.91], $p < .001$)

Higher meaning predicted fewer cardiovascular events

(RR = 0.83 [CI=0.75-0.92], $p = .001$)



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Czekierda, Banik, Park, & Luszczynska (2017)

Meta-analysis

Included both prospective and cross-sectional studies ($k=66$)



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Average effect = .258 (95% CI: .211, .304)

– moderate size indicating greater meaning predicted better health status

No evidence of publication bias



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

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AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION Society for HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY Health Psychology

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Psychological Well-Being, Education, and Mortality

Jennifer Morozink Boylan, Justin L. Tompkins, and Patrick M. Krueger
Department of Health and Behavioral Sciences, University of Colorado Denver

Objectives: Research on older adults often focuses on mitigating health risks, and less is known about protective factors that contribute to longer, healthier lives. We examine longitudinal associations between psychological well-being and mortality among a national sample of older adults and test competing hypotheses about whether the education/mortality association depends on the level of psychological well-being. **Method:** We use six waves (2006–2016) of the Health and Retirement Study, a national sample of adults over age 50 ($n = 21,172$), with 14 years of mortality follow-up. Psychological well-being is measured up to three times and includes positive affect, life satisfaction, purpose in life, social support, and optimism. Discrete-time survival models examine (a) the association between time-varying psychological well-being and mortality, and (b) interactions between psychological well-being and education on mortality. **Results:** Higher purpose in life, positive affect, optimism, social support, and life satisfaction predicted lower mortality. A 1 SD increase in most measures of psychological well-being was associated with a 2–4 year increase in life expectancy at age 50. Positive affect and purpose in life moderated the education/mortality association—the inverse association between education and mortality was stronger for those with high psychological well-being. **Conclusions:** We find strong evidence that psychological well-being predicts lower mortality risk and modifies the association between education and mortality. The inverse association between education and mortality becomes stronger at higher levels of purpose in life and positive affect. Therefore, efforts to promote life satisfaction, social support, and optimism may support longer lives without widening education disparities.

Keywords: purpose in life, positive affect, life satisfaction, optimism, social support

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But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Morozink Boylan, Tompkins, & Krueger (2022)

Health and Retirement Study Data

21,172 US adults over age 50

14 years of mortality follow-up data

Purpose in life measured using Ryff's scale (7 items)



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Difference in life expectancy between those +1 SD above the mean
vs. -1 SD below the mean in purpose in life = 8.3 yrs.

By comparison college degree vs. less than HS = 7.3 yrs.

Never smoker vs. current smokers = 9.8 yrs.



But Does Meaning Matter for Health and Wellness?


Psychological Variables



Journal of Happiness Studies (2021) 22:467–489
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00230-y>

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Relationship Between Presence of Meaning, Search for Meaning, and Subjective Well-Being: A Three-Level Meta-Analysis Based on the Meaning in Life Questionnaire

Jian-Bin Li¹ · Kai Dou²  · Yue Liang²

Published online: 7 February 2020
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Abstract

Meaning in life can be understood as how much people experience life meaning (i.e., presence of meaning, POM) and how intensely they seek life meaning (i.e., search for meaning, SFM). Previous research has related POM and SFM to the subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals, but the findings are inconsistent. This meta-analysis investigates the overall relationship between POM/SFM and SWB by examining previous studies that

But Does Meaning Matter for Health and Wellness?

Psychological Variables

- Meaning in Life Questionnaire
 - » 2 Scales
 - Presence of meaning
 - » E.g., I understand my life's meaning
 - Search for meaning
 - » E.g., I am searching for meaning in my life.



But Does Meaning Matter for Health and Wellness?

Psychological Variables

- Li, Dou, & Liang (2021)
- Meta-analysis of 147 studies (N=92,169)
- Presence of meaning positive association with subjective well-being ($ES = .418$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.390, .446]) - medium
- Search for meaning negative association with subjective well-being ($ES = -.121$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.155, -.087]) – small
- Of interest, our lab found that greater search for meaning measured in the lab prior to the pandemic was associated with greater fear of death during COVID-19 pandemic (Vagnini, Boylan, Shaffer, Rush, & Masters, 2021)



But Does Meaning Matter for Health and Wellness?

Psychological Variables

Less likely to experience depression, boredom, loneliness, and anxiety

More likely to experience feeling good about oneself and one's abilities (self-efficacy);

- optimism & hope (even among cancer patients);

- life satisfaction

- lower likelihood of mild cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's Disease

Less likely to experience posttraumatic stress and burnout

Lack M/P more likely to abuse drugs



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness

Behaviors



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness

Behaviors
(e.g., smoking,
exercise, sleep,
diet, addictions,
etc.)



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness

Behaviors
(e.g., smoking, exercise, sleep, diet, addictions, etc.)



Psychophysiological Response to Psychological Stress or the Environment



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness

Behaviors
(e.g., smoking, exercise, sleep, diet, addictions, etc.)



Psychophysiological Response to Psychological Stress or the Environment



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Purpose in life is associated with physical activity measured by accelerometer 1 / 10 | 150%

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Article

Purpose in life is associated with physical activity measured by accelerometer

Journal of Health Psychology
2016, Vol. 21(6) 962–971
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1359105314542822
hpq.sagepub.com

SAGE

Stephanie A Hooker and Kevin S Masters

Abstract
Previous research has shown that purpose in life, the belief that one's life is meaningful and goal-directed, is associated with greater engagement in self-reported physical activity. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between purpose in life and accelerometer-measured physical activity. Community volunteers ($N = 104$) completed measures of purpose in life and potential confounds and wore accelerometers for three consecutive days. Purpose in life was positively associated with objectively measured movement, moderate to vigorous physical activity, and with self-reported activity. These relationships were largely

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Meaning in Life Predicts Physical Activity

- N = 104 adults (71% female, Age 34.5)
- Completed self-report of meaning in life and potential confounds (depression, optimism, sense of control, positive mood)
- Wore accelerometers for 3 consecutive days (Thursday/ Friday/Saturday)

Hooker & Masters, 2016



Meaning in Life Predicts Physical Activity

- Positive relationship between meaning and total movement
- After controlling potential confounds, relationship was maintained – so it was not due to optimism, positive mood, etc.
- Similar trends for moderate-vigorous PA and self-report of PA

Hooker & Masters, 2016



Two Pathways for Psychological Factors to Influence Health and Wellness

Behaviors
(e.g., smoking,
exercise, sleep,
diet, addictions,
etc.)



Psychophysiological
Response to
Psychological
Stress



Journal of Psychosomatic Research 79 (2015) 451–457



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Psychosomatic Research



Purpose in life predicts allostatic load ten years later

Samuele Zilioli^{a,*}, Richard B. Slatcher^a, Anthony D. Ong^b, Tara L. Gruenewald^c^a Department of Psychology, Wayne State University, United States^b Department of Human Development, Cornell University, United States^c Davis School of Gerontology, University of Southern California, United States

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Purpose in life

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Living a purposeful life is associated with better mental and physical health, including longevity. Accumulating evidence shows that these associations might be explained by the association between life purpose and regulation of physiological systems involved in the stress response. The aim of this study was to investigate the prospective associations between life purpose and allostatic load over a 10-year period.

Methods: Analyses were conducted using data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) survey. Assessment of life purpose, psychological covariates and demographics were obtained at baseline, while biomarkers of allostatic load were assessed at the 10-year follow-up.

Results: We found that greater life purpose predicted lower levels of allostatic load at follow-up, even when controlling for other aspects of psychological well-being potentially associated with allostatic load. Further, life purpose was also a strong predictor of individual differences in self-health locus of control, i.e. beliefs about how

But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Examined allostatic load

- Cumulative multi-faceted physiological burden experienced by the body as a result of its attempts to repeatedly adjust to environmental challenges via allostasis (i.e., physiological change that cardiovascular, autonomic, neuroendocrine, immune and metabolic systems simultaneously undergo in situations of stress)
- “wear and tear on the body”

Zilioli, Slatcher, Ong, & Gruenewald, 2015



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

What is the prospective association between life purpose and allostatic load over 10 years?

Data from MIDUS (Midlife in the United States) study (N for this study = 985; those in the biomarker sample are a subset of overall MIDUS)

Zilioli, Slatcher, Ong, & Gruenewald, 2015



But Does Meaning Matter for Physical Health and Wellness?

Life purpose assessed by 3 items from Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being

Allostatic load – sum of 7 system-level (cardiovascular, lipid, glucose metabolism, inflammation, SNS, PNS, HPA) risk scores

Greater life purpose predicted lower allostatic load at 10 years, even when controlling for other aspects of psychological well-being (positive and negative affect, positive relations with others)

Zilioli, Slatcher, Ong, & Gruenewald, 2015









Drilling Down on Meaning: Making it Real Day by Day

“For the meaning of life differs from man to man (sic), from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but **rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment.**” (Frankl, 1988)

Meaning Salience – Awareness of meaning in the moment





Review of General Psychology
2018, Vol. 22, No. 1, 11–24

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1089-2680/18/\$12.00 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000115>

A Meaningful Life Is a Healthy Life: A Conceptual Model Linking Meaning and Meaning Salience to Health

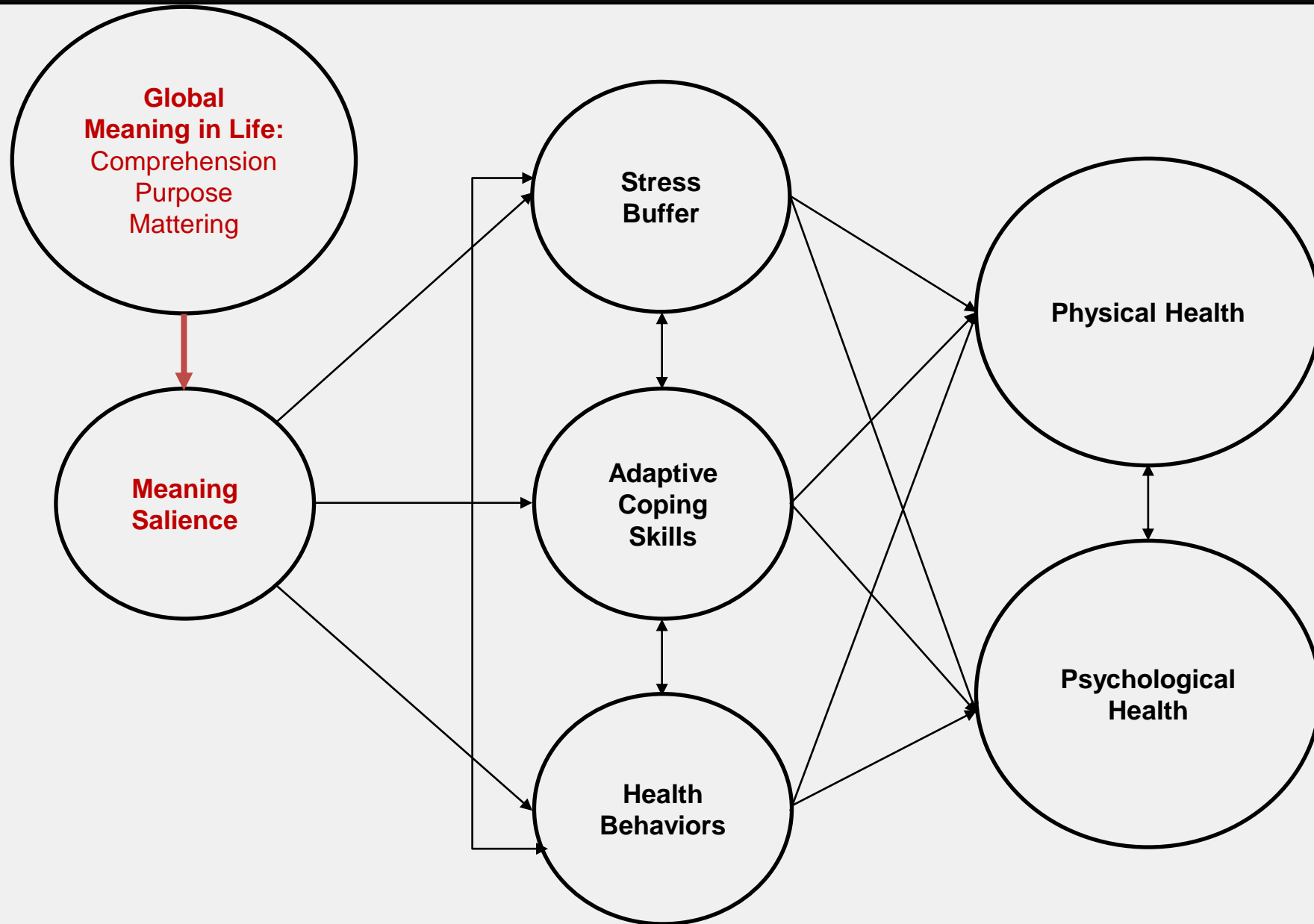
Stephanie A. Hooker and Kevin S. Masters
University of Colorado Denver

Crystal L. Park
University of Connecticut

Accumulating evidence suggests that a global sense of meaning in life is related to physical health, including increased longevity and reduced morbidity. However, the mechanisms responsible for these relationships remain largely unknown and uninvestigated. Moreover, there is no unifying conceptual framework linking meaning in life to physical health. Our aims are to (a) review the literature linking meaning in life to potential mechanisms associated with better physical health; (b) offer a comprehensive conceptual framework associating meaning in life with physical health; and (c) introduce a new construct, meaning salience, as a potentially important intermediary mechanism. Specifically, we review the evidence suggesting that meaning in life is associated with reduced stress, more adaptive coping, and greater engagement in health-promoting behaviors. Our model proposes that effects of global sense of meaning are potentiated through increased meaning salience, or daily awareness of meaning in the moment, which enhances self-regulation. Suggestions are proposed for empirically examining this new model.

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CaLM Lab

- Wondered if awareness of meaning (meaning salience) when experiencing acute stress would predict perceived stress during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 147 community dwelling adults came in for a lab stress study in 2018-19
- Measured meaning in life as well as meaning salience (in lab and as perceived overall)
- Underwent standard laboratory stressors
- Measured meaning salience during stress experience
- Measured perceived stress in early pandemic; April 2020 (essentially lockdown) and July 2020 (not lockdown but what do we do?)

Boylan, Vagnini, Rush, Larson, Wilson, Shaffer, & Masters, 2023



CaLM Lab

- General linear mixed effects model adjusting for gender, age, and baseline perceived stress – one SD increase in post-stressor meaning salience associated with .57 unit decrease in perceived stress in COVID-19 (scored 0 – 4)
- Baseline meaning salience = .70 unit decrease in perceived stress in COVID-19
- Global meaning in life = .64 unit decrease in perceived stress in COVID-19

Boylan, Vagnini, Rush, Larson, Wilson, Shaffer, & Masters, 2023



Klussman meaning salience intervention COVID-19.pdf - Adobe Acrobat Reader (64-bit)

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Current Psychology (2023) 42:1915–1922
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01538-5>

Mental health in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal examination of the ameliorating effect of meaning salience

Kristine Klussman¹  · Austin Lee Nichols¹  · Julia Langer¹ 

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, various restrictions forced people around the world to socially isolate. People were asked to stay at home and were largely unable to do many of the activities that they derived meaning from. Since meaning is often related to mental health, these restrictions were likely to decrease mental health. The current study aimed to examine these effects and

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Meaning salience during COVID-19

- During pandemic lockdown – social isolation
 - » (at beginning of study: 54.2% total self-quarantine; 36.9% staying home as much as possible; 6.3% not going to work but everything else normal)
- Intervention vs. Control (N = 96) – over one week
 - » Intervention – focused on the meaning of their daily activities
 - » Control – did nothing but complete measures
- Results
 - » Controls increased in anxiety, depression, and stress over the week
 - » Intervention either decreased or non-significant change
 - » Intervention less anxiety, depression, and stress at post-test than the controls

Klussman, Nichols, & Langer, 2021



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Masters and Hooker Health Psychology 2018 - Copy.pdf 1 / 11 | - 125% + | [Icons]

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2018, Vol. 37, No. 4, 344–354

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0278-6133/18/\$12.00 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hea0000599>

Daily Meaning Salience and Physical Activity in Previously Inactive Exercise Initiates

Stephanie A. Hooker and Kevin S. Masters
University of Colorado Denver

Objective: Individuals living with more experienced meaning, or meaning salience, may be more likely to engage in health behaviors including physical activity. This study examined daily meaning salience and physical activity in previously inactive exercise initiates. **Method:** Inactive adults ($N = 80$, 78% female, $M_{age} = 43$ years, $SD = 11$ years) intending to increase physical activity participated in a daily diary study. At baseline, participants completed self-report questionnaires of demographics, global meaning and purpose, depressive symptoms, and motivation. Fitness center attendance was extracted from the member database. Participants self-reported meaning salience, positive mood, negative mood, and physical activity (duration in minutes; intensity in ratings of perceived exertion) daily for the first 28 days. Multilevel and multiple regression analyses were used. **Results:** Multilevel models revealed that controlling for demographics, mood, and motivation, for every standard deviation increase in meaning salience, participants were 44% more likely to visit the fitness center, odds ratio (OR) = 1.44, 95% CI [1.24, 1.68], $p < .001$. Further, increases in meaning salience above average were positively related to physical activity duration, $\beta = .19$, $p < .001$, and intensity, $\beta = .13$, $p < .001$. Global meaning and purpose were not significantly related to physical activity duration, physical activity intensity, or fitness center visits over the 28 days. **Conclusions:** Results suggest that increased meaning salience, but not global meaning or purpose, is associated with physical activity participation in previously inactive exercise initiates, and may be a proximal predictor of physical activity behavior. Future research should use ecological momentary assessment (EMA) designs to examine the relationship within days and over longer intervals.

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If People are More Aware of Meaning: Will they be More Active?

- We studied 80 physically inactive adults over 28 days.
- General measure of meaning in life
- Daily recordings of meaning salience, mood, PA
- Outcomes:
 - Self-report physical activity
 - Attendance at fitness center (assessed from center records)

Hooker & Masters, 2018



If People are More Aware of Meaning: Will they be More Active?

- Meaning salience (after controlling for demographics, mood, and motivation) predicted:
 - Fitness center visits
 - 1 SD increase in meaning salience = 44% more likely to visit center
 - Above average meaning salience predicted increased PA duration
 - Above average meaning salience predicted increased PA intensity
- Global meaning did not predict outcomes

Hooker & Masters, 2018



In progress experimental interventions of meaning salience with physical activity?

- Stephanie Hooker (PI) and I are currently funded to develop a smartphone intervention to pair meaning salience prompts with physical activity prompts with middle-aged adults. Will this result in greater physical activity?
- Jonathan Shaffer and I are proposing a similar intervention with individuals who are “peri-retirement”





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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1651895>



Engaging in personally meaningful activities is associated with meaning salience and psychological well-being

Stephanie A. Hooker ^{a,b}, Kevin S. Masters^a, Kaitlyn M. Vagnini^a and Christina L. Rush ^a

^aDepartment of Psychology & Anschutz Health and Wellness Center, University of Colorado, Denver, USA; ^bHealthPartners Institute, Minneapolis, MN, USA

ABSTRACT

Engagement in personally meaningful activities is associated with greater well-being. However, most studies use cross-sectional or recall methods, and the researchers pre-determine which activities are 'meaningful.' This study examined an idiographic measure of meaningful activity participation in relation to well-being. Participants ($N = 160$; M age = 43.3 years; 77% female) rated the meaningfulness of 46 daily activities at baseline and reported their activities on eight random days over the next 4 weeks. Half the participants also completed measures of meaning salience and mood on the same days. All participants reported on psychological well-being at baseline and 4-week follow-up. Meaningful activity participation was positively associated with meaning salience and positive mood. Average engagement in meaningful activities over 8 days was positively associated with subjective vitality, life satisfaction, and purpose in life at follow-up. An idiographic measure of meaningful activity participation may further be understanding of the relationship between meaningful activity participation and well-being.

Abbreviations: ACT - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy; LET - Life Engagement Test; MALM -

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 July 2019
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KEYWORDS

Meaning in life; daily activities; values; well-being; idiographic assessment



Does engaging in meaningful activities predict well-being?

- 160 participants rated the meaningfulness of 46 daily activities (idiographic measure)
- On 8 randomly selected days over the next 4 weeks completed activity diary
- Meaningful activity calculated by assigning meaningfulness rating to each activity they reported engaging in for 24 hours
- Measured well-being (life satisfaction, purpose in life, subjective vitality) at baseline and at 4 weeks

Hooker, Masters, Vagnini, & Rush, 2020



10 Most Meaningful Activities (0 – 4)

▪ Spending time with loved ones	3.48
▪ Supporting family members' or friends' goals and interests	3.34
▪ Caring for children and other family	3.12
▪ Helping others	3.08
▪ Education/Learning/School	3.03
▪ Persevered at a valued goal even in face of obstacles	2.98
▪ Expressed my gratitude	2.93
▪ Traveling	2.90
▪ Listened carefully to another's view	2.90
▪ Sleeping	2.86

10 Most frequently reported activities

» Sleeping	2.86
» Working	2.66
» Radio/TV	1.65
» Driving	1.31
» Eating	2.43
» Spending time with loved ones	3.48
» Getting ready	1.86
» Socializing	2.57
» Physical exercise	2.41
» Caring for children and other family	3.12



10 Most Meaningful Activities (0 – 4)

- Spending time with loved ones 3.48
- Supporting family members' or friends' goals and interests 3.34
- Caring for children and other family 3.12
- Helping others 3.08
- Education/Learning/School 3.03
- Persevered at a valued goal even in face of obstacles 2.98
- Expressed my gratitude 2.93
- Traveling 2.90
- Listened carefully to another's view 2.90
- Sleeping 2.86

10 Most frequently reported activities

- » Sleeping 2.86
- » Working 2.66
- » Radio/TV 1.65
- » Driving 1.31
- » Eating 2.43
- » Spending time with loved ones 3.48
- » Getting ready 1.86
- » Socializing 2.57
- » Physical exercise 2.41
- » Caring for children and other family 3.12



Results

- Baseline well-being positively predicted engagement in meaningful activity
- Depressive symptoms were negatively related with meaningful activity
- Controlling for demographics, greater engagement in meaningful activities during the 4 weeks was positively associated with greater purpose in life, vitality and life satisfaction as measured at 4 weeks.
- A “virtuous cycle”



- Virtuous cycle is great, but what if I can't do much different than I do now?
- I have to go to work, drive, etc.

- Study of hospital cleaners
- Considered self “janitor” vs. “healthcare – part of healing process”
- Latter group – more job satisfaction, more time with patients, more time with doctors/nurses, more meaningful job
- Both groups did the same tasks

Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2014



Now to You and Me and the elephant in the room



10 Most Meaningful Activities (0 – 4)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| ■ Spending time with loved ones | 3.48 |
| ■ Supporting family members' or friends' goals and interests | 3.34 |
| ■ Caring for children and other family | 3.12 |
| ■ Helping others | 3.08 |
| ■ Education/Learning/School | 3.03 |
| ■ Persevered at a valued goal even in face of obstacles | 2.98 |
| ■ Expressed my gratitude | 2.93 |
| ■ Traveling | 2.90 |
| ■ Listened carefully to another's view | 2.90 |
| ■ Sleeping | 2.86 |



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

- “...being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself...the more one forgets himself—**by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love**—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. **..Self actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence**” (Frankl, 1946; bold added, from *Man's Search for Meaning*)



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

- **“The answer, he believed, is that we all seek a cause beyond ourselves. This was, to him, an intrinsic human need.** The cause could be large (family, country, principle) or small (a building project, the care of a pet). **The important thing was that, in ascribing value to the cause and seeing it as worth making sacrifices for, we give our lives meaning”** (Gawande, 2014; bold added, from *Being Mortal*)

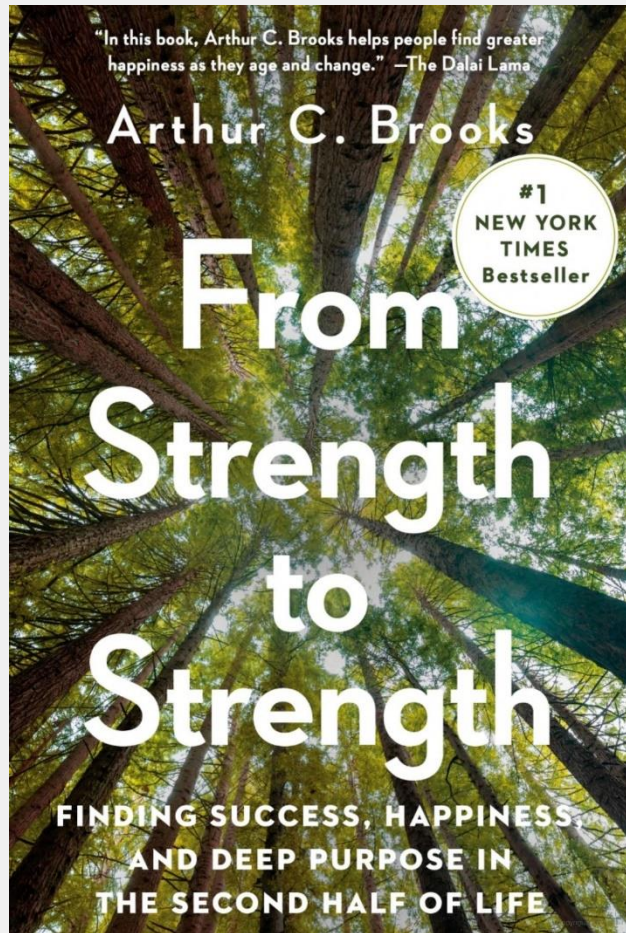


If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

- Two Characteristics of Meaningful Life – both characterized by self-transcendence and both applicable to training:
 - » Relationships – giving of yourself
 - » Something beyond yourself - a greater good, higher power, bigger cause



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

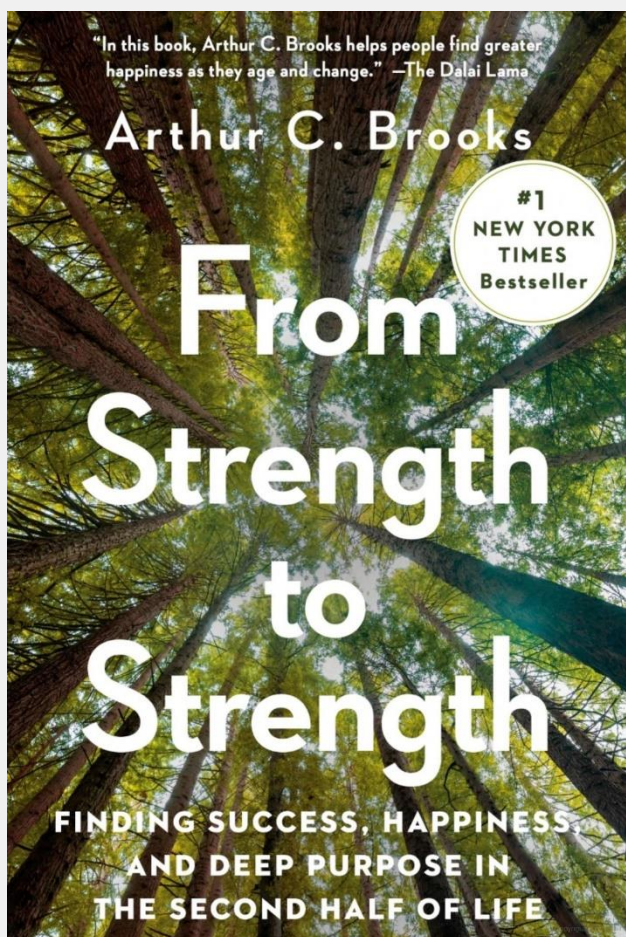


Commencement speeches:

1. Find your meaning/purpose (eudaimonia)



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?



Commencement speeches:

1. Find your meaning/purpose (eudaimonia)
2. Do work you love and you'll never work a day (hedonia – feel good, enjoyment)

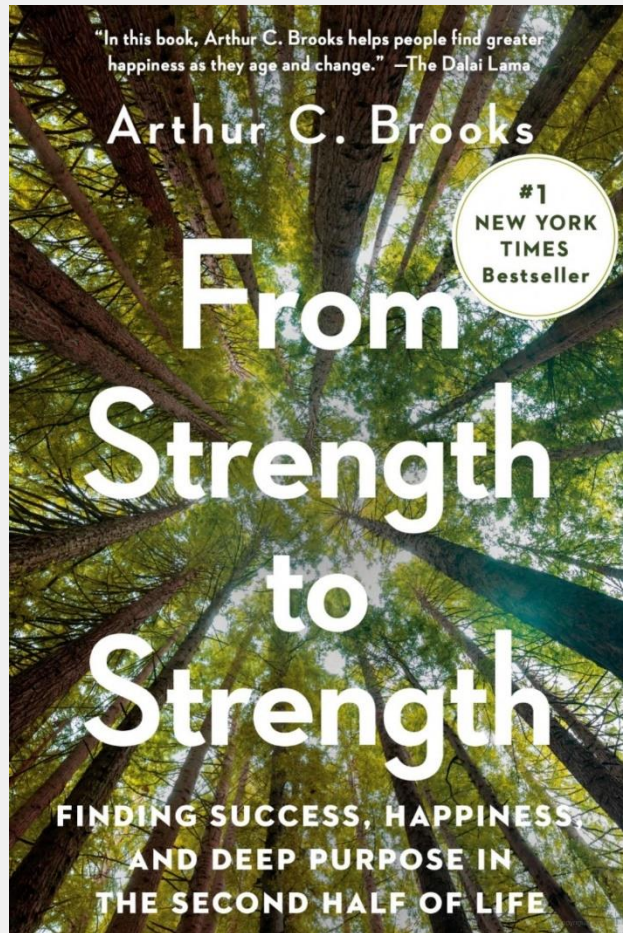
Need both:
Meaning



Enjoyment



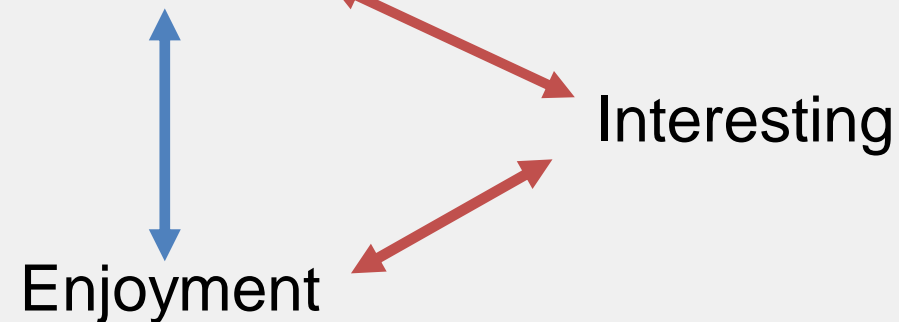
If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?



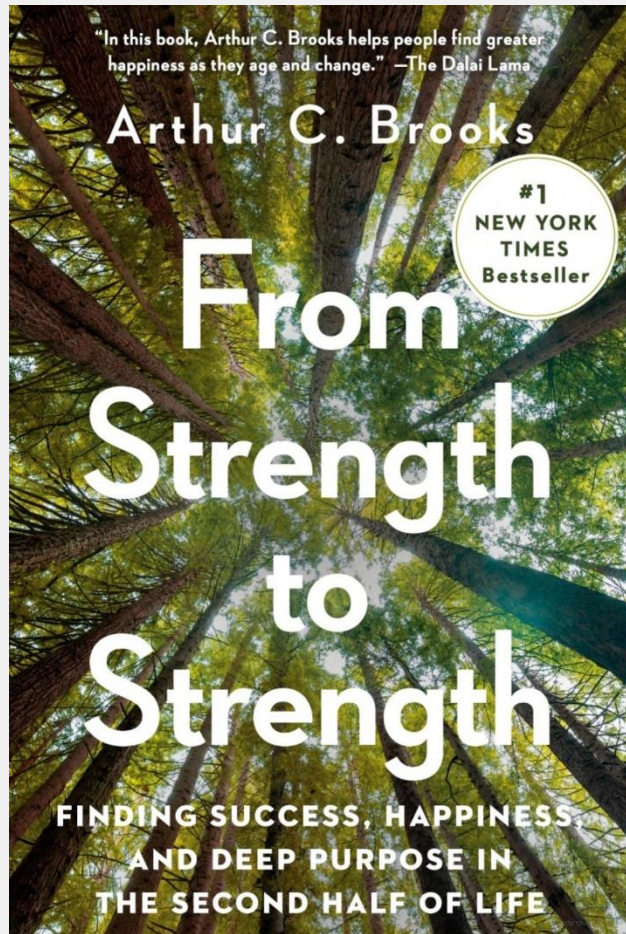
Commencement speeches:

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Need both:
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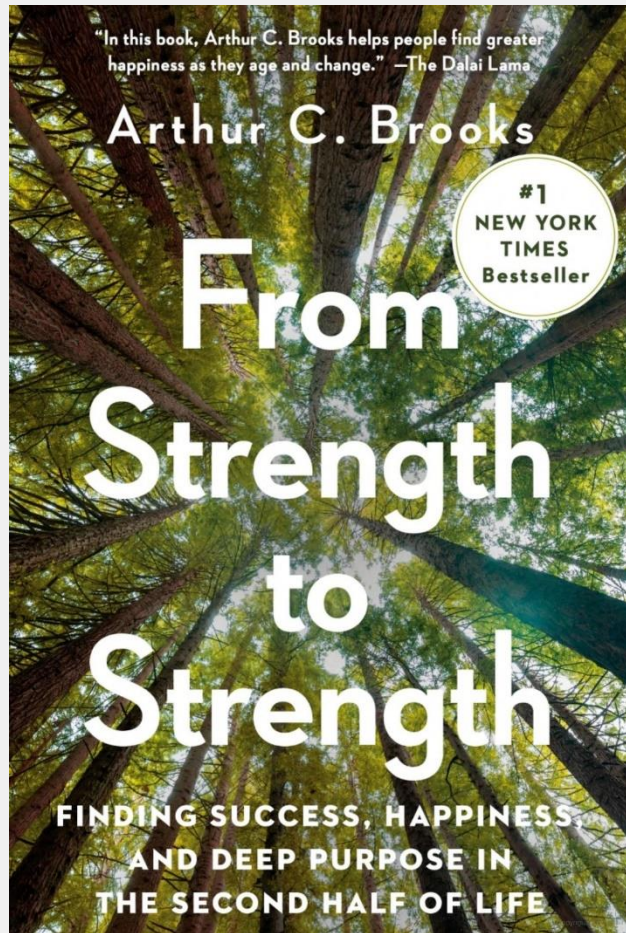
If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?



Is this work deeply interesting to me?



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

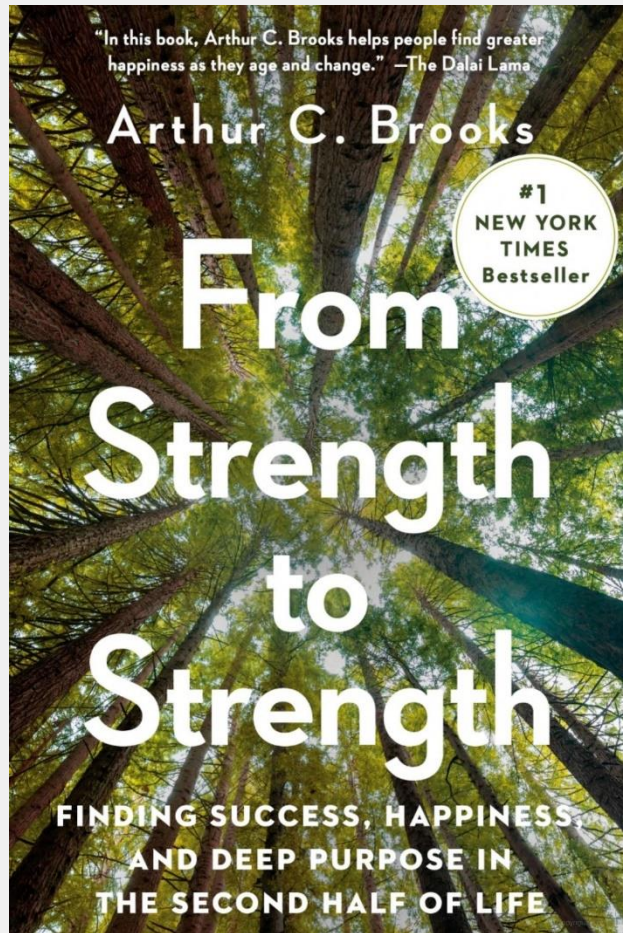


Is this work deeply interesting to me?

Work-life balance



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?

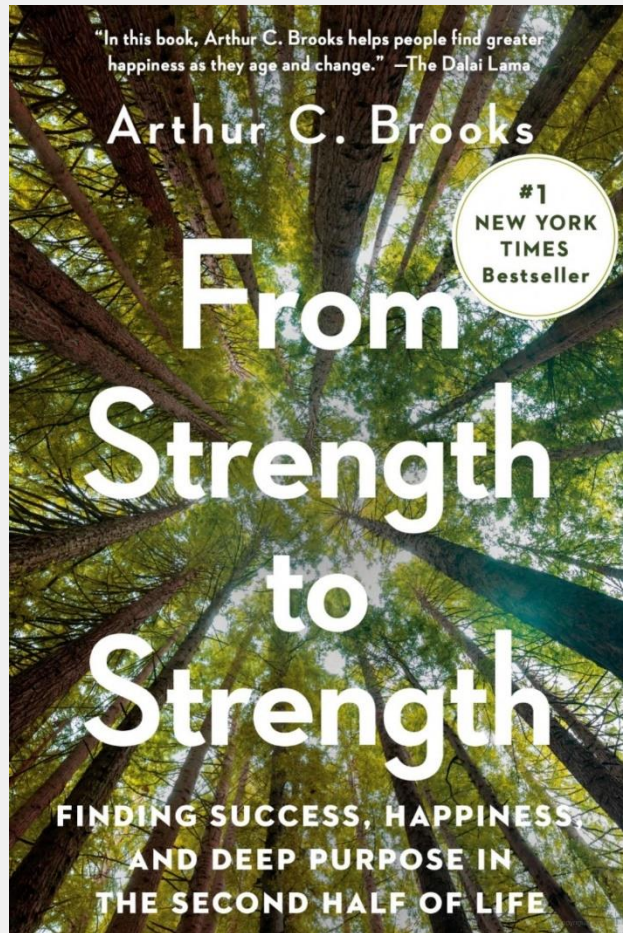


Is this work deeply interesting to me?

~~Work-life balance~~



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?



Is this work deeply interesting to me?

~~Work-life balance~~

Work-life harmony



Work-life harmony

- » The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions; **having a pleasing effect**.
- » An arrangement of parallel narratives, which presents a **single continuous narrative** text
- » Agreement, accord; harmonious relations, a consistent, orderly, congruity. or **pleasing arrangement of parts**

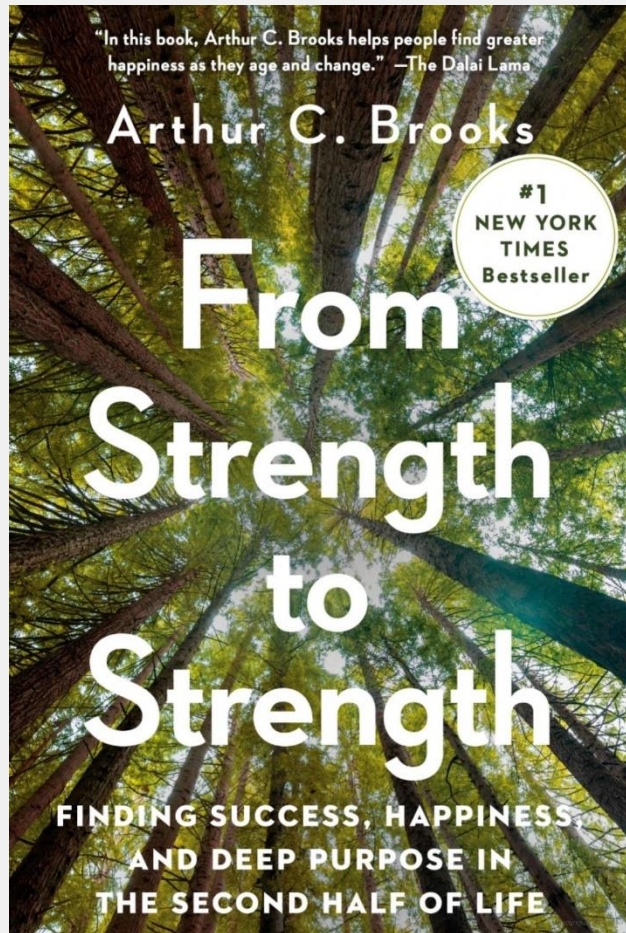


Work-life harmony

- » It will probably be found when engaged in what is deeply **interesting**, in the context of on-going **relationships**, in the service of some **greater good**.



If I Don't Feel Life is so Meaningful; What Can I Do?



Use things.
Love people.
Worship the divine.



Some possible (practical) resources:

- The Happiness Lab podcast with Dr. Laurie Santos
- *Man's Search for Meaning* and/or *The Will to Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl
- *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande
- *The Road to Character* and/or *The Second Mountain* by David Brooks
- *Stumbling on Happiness* by Daniel Gilbert
- *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* by Volf, Croasmun, & McAnnally-Linz
- *From Strength to Strength* by Arthur Brooks

