

How To Experience More Meaning In Life (M)



What gives your life meaning and how can that be enhanced?

Appreciating and finding value in everyday experiences is an important path to meaning in life, research finds.

Making meaning out of the beauty all around us, including everyday experiences, adds to the other ways that we find meaning in life.

These are:

- 'making sense' of life and finding it coherent,
- having strong, long-term goals,
- and believing that one's actions matter to others.

Set against these, people tend to consistently undervalue everyday events.

Although everyday experience might seem less important, it can be powerful, said Professor Joshua Hicks, study co-author:

“It might not relate to whether you matter in the grand scheme of things, but we’ve shown people who value the little things, like your cup of coffee in the morning or being mindful in conversations with others, tend to have a high sense of meaning in life.”

Experiential appreciation

This fourth pathway towards meaning in life, the authors call ‘experiential appreciation’.

A series of studies, involving over 3,000 people, revealed that experiential appreciation increased people’s sense of meaning in life.

For example, people who agreed with statements like the following experienced more meaning in life:

- “I have a great appreciation for the beauty of life.”
- “I appreciate a wide variety of experiences.”

Similarly, when people were encouraged to appreciate everyday experiences by writing about them or by watching awe-inspiring videos, they felt life had more meaning.

Slowing down is key to appreciating the world we live in, Professor Hicks said:

“Meaning is all around us when we can experience the natural beauty in the world.

It can be the beauty in another person’s face, the food we eat or the songs we listen to.

Right now, since cell phones and social media are so prevalent, I think that stuff detracts from our sense of meaning.

Those things can be entertaining, but too much of it can really distract from what’s real, like natural beauty.”

How to experience meaning in life

Here are some quick tips from psychological research for how to inject more meaning into life:

- **A sense of belonging to a social group** gives more meaning to life.