

Research, perspective, and
advice on psychology and relationships

EDITED BY LYNDA WRIGHT

mind

[WELL-BEING]

You don't have to find your purpose to feel more fulfilled. You just have to look for it.

by Ellen Michaud

getting the most out of life

HOW MANY TIMES recently have you caught yourself wondering, "Is this it?" or contemplating your crazy, overstuffed life and longing for something more profound? If you answered, "Too many times," you're not alone.

Studies conducted since the 9-11 attacks reveal that more Americans than ever are searching for greater meaning in their lives. And they're looking for it everywhere. Attendance at workshops on simple living has increased a thousandfold, and programs on building more deeply spiritual lives are being held within corporations and institutions as varied as Coca-Cola, ▶

MORE THAN MEANING:
Searching for life's purpose may buffer you from the health effects of stress.

SEPTEMBER 2004



DIFFERENT STROKES: People who live according to their own values can be just as fulfilled as those committed to a religious life, psychologists say.

start your journey

What's meaningful to you may not be to others, so there's no one road map to finding your purpose. But these steps will help point you in the right direction.

◆ **OUTLINE YOUR PRIORITIES AND VALUES.** Create three lists. First, write down what's important to you. Next, jot down the things that make you feel satisfied and fulfilled; then list the principles and values that guide your actions (how you determine what's right and wrong). Are the lists in harmony? For instance, you might say your family is most important to you but that your work makes you feel more fulfilled. This could leave you feeling guilty when work encroaches on family time. Use your values to determine if you've got your priorities straight (you might think family should be most important, but it isn't).

◆ **MAKE CHANGES.** Don't just work through the process of finding what's important to you. Act on it—let it dictate what you do. If family is truly most important, make adjustments to put them first (find part-time work if you can). Value altruism? Volunteer, or donate your garage as a polling site and man it on voting day. Cherish time alone? Insist that one day or night a month be phone- and e-mail free.

◆ **SLOW DOWN; RECONNECT.** Don't forget to make time for those you care about and who care about you. Invite a few friends over, hang out, enjoy their banter—allow others to be a part of your meaningful life.

NASCAR, the Oakland Raiders, and the U.S. Senate.

Perhaps the most telling development in this upsurge is the success of *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Zondervan). Written by Rick Warren, a Christian minister from Lake Forest, California, this simple 336-page book, published in 2002, stunned the world: What is essentially a plan for living a deeply spiritual life appealed to a wider, more secular audience than expected, selling 17 million copies.

Clearly, many Americans are rethinking how they live and trying to find more purpose in life than mere survival. And that quest, researchers say, may lead not only to a more satisfying existence but to a healthier one as well.

In fact, according to the results of a recent study at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), striving for meaning is among a handful of specific life goals associated with a measurable improvement in the body's immune function. The evidence seems to suggest that simply by attempting to achieve meaning-related objectives—giving and receiving love, exploring new possibilities, and working on personal development, for example—you may also be countering body-damaging hormones generated by the chronic stress of things like 6-day workweeks or a challenging illness.

"No one's really sure how it works," says UCLA psychologist Julienne Bower, Ph.D., the study's lead researcher. Somehow, by focusing on positive goals such as creating a meaningful life, you might be mobilizing a physical buffer against the everyday trials that do so much damage to your well-being.

But what is a meaningful life, anyway? "It's an examined life," says Margaret Kemeny, Ph.D., director of the Health Psychology Program at the University of California, San Francisco, and developer of the test used in the UCLA study. "It's a life

SEPTEMBER 2004

DETROL® LA
tolterodine tartrate extended-release capsules

This summary contains important information about DETROL LA. It is not meant to take the place of discussions with your doctor and it cannot replace your doctor's advice. Only your doctor can assess the benefits and risks to decide if DETROL LA is right for you. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist or other prescribing healthcare professional if you do not understand any of this information or if you want to learn more about DETROL LA.

What are DETROL® LA Capsules used for?
DETROL LA Capsules are used to treat a condition called overactive bladder. Patients with overactive bladder have these symptoms: urinary urgency (a strong and sudden desire to urinate), frequent urinations day and night, and urge incontinence (accidental loss of urine caused by a sudden and unstoppable urge to urinate).

What is an overactive bladder?
An overactive bladder is a term for involuntary contractions of the bladder muscle (detrusor).

How does DETROL® LA work?
DETROL LA blocks contractions of the bladder muscle.

What will DETROL® LA do for me?
In a study of patients with an overactive bladder, DETROL LA reduced the number of wetting accidents and urinations, and increased the amount voided per urination compared with placebo (sugar pill).

Who should not use DETROL® LA?
DETROL LA should not be used by patients with:
• urinary retention (inability to empty the bladder)
• gastric retention (delayed emptying of the stomach)
• uncontrolled narrow-angle glaucoma
• a history of any unusual or allergic reaction to DETROL LA

What are the precautions associated with use of DETROL® LA?
DETROL LA should be used with caution by patients with any of the following conditions: significant bladder outflow blockage (slow urinary stream), because of the risk of urinary retention; gastrointestinal blockage disorders, such as pyloric stenosis (a narrowing of the opening where the stomach empties into the small intestine), because of the risk of gastric retention; narrow-angle glaucoma that is being treated; and liver or kidney disease. For patients with liver disease or kidney disease the recommended dose is 2 mg daily. Medicines like DETROL LA may cause blurred vision. See also, "Can I take DETROL LA while taking other medicines?" (below). It is not known whether taking DETROL LA will affect the results of laboratory tests you may undergo for other reasons. In special studies conducted in animals and/or test tubes, the active ingredient in DETROL LA did not cause an increase in tumors, genetic changes, or changes in fertility.

Can I take DETROL® LA if I am pregnant or nursing?
DETROL LA has not been studied in pregnant women. Therefore, DETROL LA should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefit for the mother justifies the potential risk for the unborn baby. It is not known whether the active ingredient in DETROL LA passes into human milk. Therefore, mothers who breast-feed should stop taking DETROL LA until they are no longer nursing.

Can DETROL® LA be used by children?
DETROL LA has not been studied in children.

Can DETROL® LA be used by elderly patients?
No differences were seen in safety between older and younger patients taking DETROL LA in clinical studies.

Can I take DETROL® LA while taking other medicines?
As with all prescription medicines, before you take DETROL LA, it is important for your healthcare professional to know if you are taking any other medicines. Be sure to mention those that you can buy without a prescription, especially cough/cold medicines, which may also affect urination. For patients taking certain medicines (like erythromycin, Biaxin® [clarithromycin], Sparanox® [itraconazole], Nizoral® [itraconazole], Neoral® and Sandimmune® [cyclosporine], Velban® [virostatine], and micronazole), the recommended dose of DETROL LA is 2 mg daily.

What are the most common side effects of DETROL® LA?
Dry mouth was the most common side effect during 12 weeks of treatment with DETROL LA (reported by 22% of those taking 2 mg daily compared with 8% of those taking a placebo [sugar pill]). Other common side effects related to DETROL LA were headache, constipation, and abdominal pain.

What other side effects have been reported?
The following events were reported by at least 1% of patients treated with DETROL LA for 12 weeks but may or may not have been caused by DETROL LA: fatigue, dizziness, dyspepsia (indigestion), xerophthalmia (dry eyes), abnormal vision, somnolence (sleepiness), anxiety, sinusitis, and dysuria (painful urination).

How should I take DETROL® LA?
The recommended dose of DETROL LA is 4 mg daily. DETROL LA should be taken once daily with liquids and swallowed whole. The dose may be lowered to 2 mg daily if needed. For patients with liver or kidney disease and those taking certain medicines (like erythromycin, Biaxin®, Sparanox®, Nizoral®, Neoral®, Sandimmune®, Velban®, and micronazole), the recommended dose of DETROL LA is 2 mg daily.

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LITTLE THINGS:
Everyday actions and choices can bring a sense of purpose.

in which you strip away pretense, take a look at what's important, and then let those things—rather than what someone else thinks is important—drive your life."

Knowing the difference between the things that are actually important to you and those you believe *should* be is not easy. In fact, some researchers are devoting their entire careers to helping people sift through and rank their priorities.

ranking your values

ONE of those experts is Steven Reiss, Ph.D., professor of psychology and psychiatry at Ohio State University. He has developed the Reiss Profile, a bar graph that measures how highly an individual rates each of 16 basic values—honor, power, and sustenance among them—which, based on his research, form the psychological foundation of meaning. (Want to see the complete list? Go to Health.com.)

SORT IT OUT
Having trouble figuring out what gives your life meaning? Check out www.truegoods.com/main_frame.php?page=whyhere.htm for a quick, interactive way to sort out your purpose, values, and goals.

Taken as a whole, "the 16 rankings show what you must do to experience a meaningful life," Reiss says. "A person who puts a high value on curiosity and a low value on prestige or status, for example, might find a life of quiet contemplation and learning to be meaningful, while someone who values acceptance highly but is not especially curious might find meaning in a life filled with people, not books. What was meaningful to Sir Isaac Newton, the mathematician and scientist, would have been meaningless to Ray Kroc, McDonald's Corp.'s founder, who hated intellectualism." It's also important to note that a person who values status and prestige can lead as meaningful a life as someone whose main focus is altruism—the former as a renowned heart surgeon, for example, and the latter as director of an organ-donor bank.

expect some trial and error

DESPITE the work of people like Reiss, the search for meaning is more art than science. It may take some creativity and flexibility. That has been an important lesson for Cecile Andrews of Seeds of Simplicity, an organization sponsored by Cornell University that is dedicated helping people find ways to "unstuff" their lives. She defines a meaningful life as one that includes leisurely nights filled with laughter and friends, but it took her a while to figure that out.

At a time when their peers were focused primarily on advancing their careers, Andrews, a former hospital administrator, and her husband, *Seattle Times* reporter Paul Andrews, realized that their employers'

priorities had little to do with their own. They weren't miserable, or even unhappy, but something was lacking: time. "We wanted to move slowly and savor life, to take time to just hang out, play our flute and guitar, or just sit and watch our sheets dry on the clothesline," Cecile says.

So the couple swapped their full-time jobs for part-time work and rented out a portion of their Seattle home to help make up the lost income. It was a risky move, but the change allowed them to create a life that reflects their values. "If I did nothing more than have parties, I would be contributing more to society than almost anything," Cecile says. "Connecting with friends gives us a sense of meaning that helps us overcome the helplessness we all feel in today's world."

don't deny the obvious

MAJOR CHANGES in direction like the one made by the Andrewses work for some people. For most folks, however, the process of finding meaning will involve little more than a shift in perspective. Think of it this way: What if the search is more about recognizing the ways your life is meaningful already, rather than making some dramatic change so that you'll feel more fulfilled?

Sometimes, "a meaningful life is smaller than you think," says Felicia R. Lee, a *New York Times* reporter who was part of the Pulitzer Prize-winning team that produced "Portraits of Grief," a yearlong series that profiled those who died at the World Trade Center on September 11. "At first we thought we were working on little profiles of people, a list of their hobbies and accomplishments. Instead, they were little snapshots of what someone meant to a grandparent or neighbor or sibling. People spoke about missing someone's presence, or being able to e-mail them, or the way they smiled, or spending a day in the park with

them ... the small things, the little day-to-day choices one makes. Only later did we find out that we were profiling a top-selling bond trader."

Lee remembers writing the story of a harried mother who was running late for work but stopped and took a moment to cuddle when her child asked. What could have been more meaningful than creating what would be their last moment together?

"It's all so unpredictable and com-

plicated and messy that all you can do is live a good life according to your values," Lee says. "It sounds corny, but don't take things for granted. Don't just look forward to your vacation; enjoy the process of planning for it. Give life everything you have to give. Give it your all." ■

Ellen Michaud is an award-winning author who has written for The New York Times and The Washington Post.

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