

D E C E M B E R , 2 0 2 4

Thinking on Things Letter

An indispensable letter that's better than a bagel with lox, onions, capers, cream cheese and an expensive caramel latte. Yup !!!!

The Founders Report

Hello Loyal Readers

Hello friends --- I know it's been a few months since the last installment of this mighty and wonderful letter.

Well -- lots has happened lately including a couple of residents being discharged to independent living, such as their own apartments. Living in your own apartment is an impressive achievement and we're thrilled for these residents pursuing full recovery. One resident at another facility of ours is working full time at Grocery Outlet and creating a discharge plan to locate an apartment, a car and reunite with family. These residents have made significant gains in recovery and deserve to feel great about themselves. I remain impressed with our resident's pursuit of academic and recovery goals with a purpose. We're always discussing in group how to set recovery goals with a purpose; meaning we examine the sacrifices made, psychological benefits of attaining the goal and how to access resources and supports to achieve the goal.

The residents enjoyed Thanksgiving and we are planning for a meaningful holiday season. So -- we began decorating to invite our loving souls to a joyous holiday season. The spirit of unconditional friendship and love spreads through Founders and one feels, hears and sees the warmth enveloping the entire building. It's a holy place with loving souls inviting everyone to belong in meaningful ways.

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We're all good at Founders House of Hope. We've still got four residents working at Grocery Outlet and the owner remains so impressed with their work ethic. They have been there for about two years. The residents get on the bus around 8:00 am and return to Founders after working four hours. We purchased a few Amazon Fire tablets and other things for residents working on achieving their recovery goals. So -- all is good at Founders.

The company I work for called Trucare has seven facilities and I visit all but one of them. We provide treatment for individuals with mental health conditions and I'm at the other locations one to two days a week. In January of 2022, the company established a nonprofit called Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery. The purpose of the nonprofit is to generate funds to support the psychosocial rehabilitation program I operate at Founders and the other facilities. The funds are distributed across the other facilities and are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the residents. Finally, I want to mention our internship program at Founders. I established a partnership with California State University Dominguez Hills, California State University Fullerton and California State University Long Beach to have interns spend time with us at Founders. We're completing the Fall, 2024 semester and had interns and volunteers learning about psychosocial rehabilitation, recovery, how to co-facilitate skill acquisition groups and how to assess and write treatment plans for residents. It's been so gratifying for me to see these future clinicians learn and challenge themselves to pursue graduate work in social work, marriage and family therapy and clinical psychology. I need to express my gratitude for having all my senior center students from Norwalk Senior Center and Cerritos Senior Center eternally supporting my work at Founders. The material and financial donations you give me enriches the quality of life for our residents. All of you are sweet, loving souls making a remarkable difference in the lives of our residents. Your friendship means lots to me and the residents.

Knights of Columbus, Santa Fe Springs Council Supporting Founders House of Hope

Founders is blessed to be supported by The Knights of Columbus, St. Pious Church in Santa Fe Springs. One of the Knights named Renee Nault and his team of Knights have been supporting us for the last 20 years. These faithful, loving souls have donated material items such as televisions, laptops, bicycles, clothes and tablets to our residents. Further, they have provided ice cream socials and snack items to support the operation of our convenience store called Founders Hut. Every X-Mas Renee loves to treat everyone to his homemade lasagna which he and his fraternity of Knights come to serve the residents. Each resident also receives several X-Mas gifts the Knights provide. The residents love to call Renee "The Lasagna Man." All of the men and women of the Knights are performing the Lord's holy work in the world. The women also come to serve meals and distribute gifts to the residents. We are truly eternally blessed and thankful to this charitable organization that only helps repair the world through their charity. Recently they began honoring residents who are veterans by surprising them with gift cards. The Knights of Columbus is the world's largest Catholic family fraternal service organization with 1.7 million members. It provides members and their families with volunteer opportunities in service to the Catholic Church, their communities, families and young people.

This and That

I have more wonderful news to report about Founders. Our relationship with the Grocery Outlet store near where I live in Los Alamitos has been a reservoir of endless blessings. Every week I am given a donation of products by Chris who owns the store. These items include snacks, juices, candy and other products we stock in Founders Hut, a convenience store residents operate at Founders. However, our greatest gift is a \$12,400 donation we received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Chris's daughter works for this foundation, and we were eligible to receive this check. The funds will be used to enhance quality of life for our residents in all six of our facilities. Chris and his daughter made this possible for our nonprofit Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery. You can read more about our nonprofit by visiting my website and navigating to the page: Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery. My website is: www.elijahlevy.com

Founders Internship Program

We just finished the Fall, 2024 semester which sadly ended internships for our wonderful students. We had the following interns for four months: Alia Robles, Barbara Tothova, David Chavelas, Sterling Millsap and Esmerelda Plata. I also had former students volunteering which included Marcus West and Christian Dergazarian. Other volunteers included Melissa Camarena, Julianna Thrasher and Angela Hakobyan. These students are pursuing graduate degrees in psychology, social work, nursing school, medical school and physician assistant programs. I'm impressed by the strong, genuine commitment they've all made to becoming mental health/health care professionals in the near future. The clinical knowledge they gain being with us, in addition to learning how our psychosocial rehabilitation program provides capacity building and skill acquisition is invaluable to their development and promise to become valued health care providers. I derive so much pleasure knowing I can help these brilliant young minds discover more about themselves by motivating them to ask the questions that matter most to their development and career choices.

The Meaning of Life

I've collected what some of the greatest thinkers have to say about the meaning of life. Enjoy.

Abraham Maslow – Meaning is experienced by the self-actualized, growth motivated person who delights in using his creative powers for their own sake, and who can affirm himself and simultaneously transcend himself through peak experiences.

Paul Tillich – Man can choose to make his life meaningful by surrendering in faith and love to Jesus. By opening to Jesus and experiencing His acceptance and forgiveness, one experiences the joy and freedom of new being and the courage to be oneself.

Abraham Joshua Heschel – Man experiences his life as meaningful when he lives in G-d's presence—not simply by encountering G-d in the world, but primarily by serving G-d in everyday life, infusing every moment with the spirit of G-d and by dedicating himself to ends outside himself.

Rollo May – Meaning is experienced by a person centered in himself, who is able to live by his highest values, who knows his own intentionality, feels the power of his will to choose, and is able to love.

An Intractable Malaise

We live in relatively good, yet troubling times. Economic stability, low rates of crime and stable, governing institutions tends to predict good life satisfaction for Americans. However, our current political climate has never been so vitriolic, with political opponents viciously attacking each other's personhood. The uncertainties associated with political and cultural shifts proposed by candidates running for president leaves us confused and dizzying.

We are susceptible to being disillusioned, thinking relief comes from creating oversimplified strategies resulting from not asking the right questions, the ones that matter the most to us. We analyze the causes of inflation, health issues, dysfunctional marriages and relationships, high unemployment, homelessness and poverty. A collective worry emerges; uncertainty and anxiety that hurts the quality of our lives. Many are paralyzed in a state of chronic helplessness and are investing ultimate faith for salvation delivered by a prophet. We cannot trust all in leadership positions to act in ways that serve the greater good, worrying they are motivated by self-interest and material gain. We share a collective disillusionment that is the product of a vital lie by leaders promising to have our interest and welfare in mind.

Robert Nisbet sums it up nicely:

It has become steadily clearer to me that alienation is one of the determining realities of the contemporary age By alienation I mean the state of mind that can find a social order remote, reprehensible, or fraudulent; beyond real hope or desire; inviting apathy, boredom, or even hostility. The individual does not only not feel a part of the social order; he has lost interest in being part of it. For a constantly enlarging number of persons, including, significantly, young persons of high school and college age, this state of alienation has become profoundly influential in both behavior and thought.

The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom 1953

Our society, democracy and culture grants us self-determination. We have innate needs including being autonomous, competent and to belong. Satisfying these and related needs promotes our well-being, survivability, psychological and physical growth toward optimal functioning. Central to achieving optimal functioning is knowing what matters to you the most. Culture is a meaning making system with its social institutions, language, religion, arts, customs, language and much more. The values that regulate our culture are visible and play a central role in shaping our collective, cooperative behavior. An emphasis and recognition is placed on achievement, beating your competitor and displaying status, luxury symbols. We are an individualist society honoring our unique abilities, traits and autonomy in pursuit of success and meaning.

Cooperative behavior has produced a culture to satisfy our many needs and preserve our survival. Life expectancy has risen impressively and we're less likely to experience a violent death. Our living standard has increased, and we've made revolutionary discoveries in medicine to sustain life for souls living with chronic illnesses. Some Americans complain of long commutes to work, insecure jobs, inflation, chronic health issues and dissatisfying careers. These concerns surface from uncertainty regarding what we really want out of life and economic stability. Alienation is a pervasive and stable, subjective feeling produced by living in an impersonal, industrialized society.

We are also innately altruistic, more than any other species. If we're driven to maximize self-gain, then why be selfless and help a stranger? We know the reward center in the brain's limbic system is activated when we're altruistic. Ironically altruism can also end one's life when coming to the aid of someone being assaulted and dying in the process.

The ridiculously rapid pace of technology has simplified and complicated our lives with digital vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities include data breaches, cyber threats, information leakage and other types of exploitation. We are so addicted and dependent on technology to obtain immediate access to resources to live efficient lives. Navigating our urgency driven and hurried lifestyles is dominated by creating efficient strategies to maximize time and decrease worry. If access to our technology is blocked stress levels increase. Imagine not having access to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tiktok or online gaming. Every day, fascination with new technology demands our immediate attention.

Irony and unpredictability are a fixed element of human nature. It's an illusion to think you can immunize yourself from chance; unanticipated events that upset life. We are given to capricious, altruistic and benevolent behavior, only to be malevolent the next moment. Neuroscientists study the brain, theorizing and attempting to reduce hate, violence, narcissism and antisocial behavior to its neuronal components.

The Lord knew He took chances creating us and now we work at creating conditions for people to live peacefully without religious, political and other forms of persecution. We need governments led by ethical leaders whose systems serve the greater good. Historically, we painfully admit hate exists and it derives from fear, ignorance and mistrust. Hate is the most destructive element in human nature, and it accounts for the epic number of deaths in history. Genocide and wars resulting from religious, political and racial intolerance has annihilated millions.

An aura of dysphoria has penetrated the lives of some Americans and chronic discontent is keeping some hopeless and uncertain about their future. Certainly, living in an industrialized, urgency driven culture can undermine the search for our authentic self, depriving some of meaning and genuine, enduring happiness. We experience existential dread and alienation. One struggles to overcome an unrelenting, nagging feeling surrounding their place in the world and their future. The ultimate question remains what is the meaning of my life? The world may appear meaningless and purposeless for some. Unexpected change creates troublesome adjustments, leaving us susceptible for turning to maladaptive coping strategies. These are all ephemeral, temporary fixes to serious, chronic, and complicated problems that will only persist until we make a genuine investment to modify our life. The world may not appear to be an ordered, coherent place and one loses faith that efforts they make to generate meaning may be illusory not be worth the investment.

In surveying Americans, estimates are that about 80% admit they're under stress. The lifestyles some lead, including long commutes to work, dissatisfying jobs, worry about our children, our health, anxiety and uncertainty about whether we'll be laid off can overload our system. We've experienced economic downturns; political conflicts and we are emerging from a pandemic. Our minds and bodies have been compromised in epic ways and it carries serious long-term consequences. At many turns, we're needing to manage a concern before it becomes a crisis.

In addition, estimates indicate that 33 million, or 14% of Americans are problem drinkers. A pervasive atmosphere of discontent is undeniably present in contemporary times. It is attributed, in part to the furious pace we're maintaining just to adapt to societal changes which can leave us emotionally and physically exhausted. We may experience life as complicated, impersonal, and ever-changing in response to undesired change. Some are pulled away from appreciating commitments to family and friends. The existential vacuum we're trapped in produces feelings of alienation and despair in a seemingly impersonal world. The pervasive feeling of helplessness leaves us powerless and wishing for an elixir or to be magically fixed. Remember—despite all of us experiencing stress in our daily lives, stress only becomes unbearable and a tremendous burden if you feel you have lost control—that you cannot enact healthy, adaptive change to restore homeostasis, fulfillment and purpose in life. The confusion we experience may result from conflicts around what we really want out of life. Our society often prescribes values and expectations for us and unless you stop, regroup and ask yourself if pursuing these societal values adds meaning and purpose in your life, you'll be achieving for others and not necessarily you. We're told to attend college, get married and have children, enter a career, purchase positional good (status objects) and conform in general.

Human beings are endowed with an authentic, true self that when expressed generates inner harmony, meaning and purpose in life. We attempt to satisfy our core needs, desire to increase self-awareness hoping that knowing ourselves better will add to life fulfillment. Discovering your true self will allow you to make decisions that better fulfill your social, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs. Experiencing life fully is the ultimate journey and goal. The existential questions raising anxiety will be tamed, such as what is the purpose of my life, my reason to live and why am I here. Yet how many of us are motivated to express our authentic self? It would constitute an ultimate shame for one to ignore pursuit of their genuine self. The authentic self is the inner hero seeking expression and is a treasure chest needing to be unlocked. Unless it's unlocked, your treasures will never be shared with the world. The hero within you is an archetype deeply embedded in your soul and psyche.

A Problem in Human Nature

We have a problem in human nature. All of us act in ways that serve our self-interest. The physical laws of nature are rigidly fixed compared to the less predictable theories in the social and behavioral world. These are universal and theories indicate that human beings have different desires, interests and motivations. If your interests match up with others, then your needs will be satisfied. From an economic, psychological perspective, we must realize that resources are limited. Given this reality we create strategies to achieve the things we desire; nice cars, fancy homes, expensive vacations and devices to enhance quality of life.

Aristotle the stoic early on reminded us that we innately desired to embrace truth, to behave morally so we can taste the good life. Activating virtues are a central, vital component of experiencing happiness and possessing the capacity to make the right ethical choices when encountering an ethical or moral dilemma. For Aristotle, virtues include bravery, wisdom, justice, honesty, and generosity. Similarly, Plato believed human beings were rational social animals, needing others to have our needs met.

Taming Insatiable Desires for Attention

Human beings desire things to fulfill their needs and this is healthy and adaptive. I purchase dental floss to maintain my oral hygiene and healthy gums. I need the dental floss but not the newest \$10,000 triathlon bike. The triathlon bike I ride is just fine for now. To temper desires, one needs to cultivate an attitude of having a good enough number of things. Practicing good enough thinking will help tame the desire to overreach and live big. Otherwise, one is at risk for purchasing unnecessary devices and goods that increase debt. Our consumerist history has capitalized on our vulnerabilities and persuasive ads and marketing strategies has us believing it will produce enduring happiness. Genuine, enduring happiness results from doing our fitting, true work and meaningful relationships. The expensive car, cell phone or expensive piece of jewelry will not add to my genuine, enduring happiness because they're objects of illusory happiness outside of myself. However, we are lured by society that we can impress others by what we have; the glamorous, expensive accessories of life most people cannot afford.

Undoubtedly, our culture and society has an embedded system that glamorizes and admires individuals possessing positional goods and fame. Our hunger for incessant adulation must be fed, along with thirst for showing our unlimited success, prestigious job titles, power and fame. Our culture conditions us to define success by financial prosperity, power and possessing objects of high value. Greed is the unlimited pursuit of all these things, and it fills one with the illusion of securing lasting happiness. In the end -- one is left with an insatiable appetite for overconsumption, power and excessive need for attention. In sum, the more you are aware of the good you have in your life, the less susceptible you'll be to hunger for materialism, attention and overconsumption.

Narcissism: A Fixed Element of the Human Condition

The word narcissism derives from the Greek mythological character Narcissus who was admired for his beauty. Narcissus discovers a body of water and after seeing his reflection in the water, he spends much of his life admiring his beauty. The modern term narcissism has now become one of the personality disorders Narcissistic Personality Disorder and it is characterized by an incessant need for self-adulation, self-absorption, grandiosity, sense of entitlement and having little empathy and concern for others. If not given special attention, these individuals become unhappy, and their relationships suffer. A narcissist expects to be given special attention and he/she claims to have unlimited success while exaggerating their many impressive accomplishments to reveal their financial prosperity. There is a tendency to devalue others and be manipulative and exploitative. If they don't receive excessive attention, they can become angry, impatient and difficulty interacting with others.

The tendency for people to be self-important, seek constant attention and talk about their unlimited success seems to be a fixed part of our human condition. Certain individuals enjoy standing above others to experience self-aggrandizement. The desire to command center stage wherever I am invites attention and adulation from others. Human beings need to be experienced as worthy by others and this generates optimal levels of self-esteem. Self-enhancing strategies are healthy maneuvers to reveal our competencies to others. However, there may be a tendency to exaggerate our talents and abilities to a fault. We have a fundamental need to also do social comparisons, some of which are downward comparisons so we can feel personally and culturally superior to others. Interestingly, studying self-enhancing strategies universally or cross culturally reveals that it is more common in western, individualistic cultures because our self-esteem is more vulnerable to attack when observing others more successful than us.

Acknowledging one has self-worth is healthy and adaptive. One needs to know he/she is a valued human being for the good they bring to the world. Ideally, others say you matter to the world because they see you acting in altruistic ways; you are thoughtful, kind, empathic and selfless. These are soul traits we admire in just, decent and good people. One can succeed in life by not chasing materialism and displaying their positional goods to gain attention. Not all of us are competitive, trying to outsmart and outgain others to show our financial acumen and be admired.

The rise in narcissism can be attributed to internet, media and celebrity circles. It pervades the fabric of our society and can be toxic to our relationships. It has distanced us from commitments to family, friends and communities because we've become more self-indulgent, selfish, and self-absorbed with our appearance and outlandish objects. We are fascinated with reality shows depicting celebrities in their outlandish lifestyles. Some immerse themselves in these shows and these people show their narcissistic traits. Our perceptions can be influenced by watching tv reality stars live abundantly; multimillion dollar homes, lavish cars and flying around in their private jets surrounded by their personal aids attending to their needs. Aside from reality tv, lyrics in songs and materialism, sex, money and drug use. Social media allows people to display their riches living in high society. People don't post on Facebook who their favorite authors are or the ten most influential books they've read in their life. Some people post they took a shower after running a 5k, and a moment later a friend posts they just ran a marathon and are taking a shower. If you want to truly impress someone to gain attention, outdo the 5k runner and marathoner by posting you just crossed the finish line at Ironman and are taking a well-deserved shower.

One then asks if narcissism is a modern epidemic? Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on individual striving for success, competitiveness, fame and power. Is America the most narcissistic country in the world? It is and estimates are that 1 in 200 Americans would meet criteria for narcissistic personality disorder. We read stories in print media, social media and television about celebrities, athletes and politicians purchasing 40-million-dollar homes, exotic cars, yachts and islands.

So, what contributes to people desperately needing to impress others? Perhaps it is attributed to our historical pursuit of individualism; the belief that each individual must carve out their piece of the goods in society while being self-reliant, independent, pursuing their own goals and valuing the needs of the self over collective, societal needs. Individualism inherently drives competition and the expectation of a rewards for strong efforts made. We have shifted from a concern for the greater good of the community to an obsession with the self; an identity cut off from the collective whole.

Honoring our individual liberty and expression of our unique individuality however shouldn't necessarily produce a self-absorbed, immodest and self-entitled individual desiring constant adulation. The narcissist has a powerful need to be seen with their positional goods which conveys their unlimited success in life. The more we honor these individuals, the more self-centered a society we become. The essential features of narcissism include a lack of empathy, grandiosity, a sustained sense of entitlement and an endless desire for admiration. However, our analysis of the origins of the narcissistic individual reveals that they suffer from a fragile self-esteem and their inflated sense of self-importance, excessive need for attention and admiration results from an unconscious strategy to repress pain and shame from not having their basic needs met at some developmental stage in early childhood.

Social Media and its Effect on Mental Health

Undoubtedly social media has proliferated since its inception around 2004. Facebook has approximately three billion users worldwide. It does provide positive experiences such as community building and healthy sharing of life experiences. We are immediately connected to school, work and friends and it reduces isolation. Yet it is incredibly addictive, and users spread misinformation about issues important to all of us. Fatigue comes after one spends hours on social media. Studies document the relationship between heavy use of social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety and loneliness. Viewing others on social media enjoying luxurious vacations, owning luxurious cars and living abundantly can lower one's self-esteem and lead them to believe they're experiencing a poorer quality of life. In the end, one evaluates themselves as missing out on experiences and perceiving themselves as inadequate. People may ask themselves why am I missing out on these experiences? What does it say about me and my capabilities when I compare myself to others seemingly better off than me? Social media platforms are outlets for people to cyberbully and promote unhealthy and unrealistic expectations about body image and how to become popular. A vulnerable teenager can easily be seduced into behaviors he/she is missing out on by not having the ideal body image and other desirable traits to be popular.

Spending time on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok can adversely affect one's mental health. It can contribute to developing an anxiety or depressive disorder, in addition to body image and eating disorders, especially among adolescent females. Social media is effectively modifying how people perceive what is beautiful. The rampant images and texting of unrealistic standards of what beauty represents seduces viewers to strongly identify, internalize and believe these ideas. Some make upward social comparisons to models and celebrities, their glamorous lifestyles and they end up feeling dissatisfied with their life, in addition to having a negative self-evaluation.

Body Dysmorphic Disorder can result from an obsession of knowing how your body is flawed. Some individuals constantly compare themselves to others. The risk factors for body dysmorphic disorder include being a teenage boy or girl and being victim to teasing in school, neglect, embracing society's views/expectations of what constitutes beauty and tending to being perfectionistic. Other risk factors include having a low self-esteem and social isolation.

The Search for Meaningful Work

Ideally--- what should drive work? Perhaps it needs to be charged by spirit; by something that ultimately deepens and enriches our lives; that allows us to connect the work we do to benefit humanity. Our need for validation and feeling worthwhile can derive from the work we do when others acknowledge that our labor (relationships with others) has made a difference in their lives. William James said, "I will act as if what I do makes a difference." We want to make meaningful contributions to the world—and by clarifying the values that drive our life, the more you will see a connection to how your work contributes to the pleasure of others. Meaningful work is something you truly value, it is work that pulls for the best in you; something that is intrinsically motivating for you, and it's work that is valued for itself. If one feels that his/her work truly pulls for their knowledge, talents and assets; and they are passionate about their work— then he/she can assert that it is genuine, true work. Passion comes from deep inside of us—it's charged by spirit, and it intrinsically drives us to perform at our highest levels.

Since childhood, our socialization process taught us we needed to become something, a nurse, plumber, lawyer, teacher, bus driver, firefighter, pilot, mechanic. Being informs our actions, and defines our self-concept as a great mother, father, plumber, recruiter, lawyer, student and we're likely to feel self-assured and connected to what we've become and what we are with others; we are a great sibling, plumber, mother to my kids because I operate in my role as a mother exceptionally well—I draw self-esteem from my functioning as a mother in this role.

On the flip side--- to "have" suggests we concern ourselves with materialistic consumption where we're likely to define who we are by objects to accessorize our lives. Again—in moderation this isn't so bad--- but if you're primarily driven by attaining objects of status to show others your success then you'll be working long hours for more money, spend time looking for others to compare yourself to and discover they've got more than you, and you'll likely become what I call the "hungry and dying for attention" individual. Accumulating material status objects does not lead one to be passionate about their work. What's the problem? In our culture money can be used symbolically to define success and for some, it is life-enhancing; in other words, it buys one life—because without money you experience social death

In summary, through work we express our deepest desires for connecting with the larger social and cultural community. All human beings desire to see how they belong to the larger community of humanity. Clarifying for oneself how he belongs—feels connected to community anchors will more clearly validate his contribution to improving conditions for all.

If your work ushers you there—through a whisper that finds your ear in the dark night, a calling or through a dream; and you're passionate about it because it pulls for your competencies, work values and preferences—then can you consider it sacred work?

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.

--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Man cannot endure his own littleness unless he can translate it into meaningfulness on the largest possible level.

--Ernest Becker

Poetry by Elie

Man—This Tamed Being

I don't know that man can be tamed.
Half animal, half social, half biological.
Freud claimed dark, ferocious, unconscious forces beyond our control drive behavior.
Who is responsible for taming this social animal?
Sociobiologists say nature can tame, and biology can tame.
Instinctual urges, aggression, sex, death instinct and primary process needs powerful, disciplined taming.
Can institutions like religion tame?
Obligated social conformity, or social control.
Did G-d equip man with the internal mechanism to tame himself?
The internal mechanism malfunctions in the untamed.

Pass off Memory as Time

Memory. A euphemism for time.
Memories chronologically ordered compose time and life.
An intruder— uninvited agent can infect memory, causing it to misalign time and confuse life's timeline. Consciousness wanes, intellectual functions deteriorate.
Unfamiliar images enter the visual field, the known become unknown, the inheritor of this anguished illness of misaligned time.
Unknown to himself.
knower does not know what he knew.
The knower does not know who he's supposed to know.
The knower does not know his condemned anguish.

Talkin'

My purpose in life—well, that's a question for an existentialist and I'm not one of those introspective, deeply philosophical people questioning why I'm here, who put me here and what I'm supposed to do with my life. I'm simply doing—and there's nothing complicated about it. I move around in a materialist world and will continue doing so until I break down. It's a preservation thing. My life is an instrument—a sort of utility, work for the mortgage, food and occasionally enjoy good ice cream and shrimp. I like shrimp—but not with ice cream. That's it for my purpose in life. By the way, why does everything need to have a purpose? One time, a philosopher asked me if I knew what the purpose of aging was, followed by my purpose in life. Now that's a bizarre question. I advised him to ask a gerontologist. Between you and me—it seemed like a stupid question. What's your purpose in life? I've got a friend named Hank. He's a plumber, and when I've got a problem, he tells me to get the crud out of the lines. Hank also warns me about how to keep the tree root out of the pipes and he's also got a plumber's license on his greasy wall. For his time, I end up making him a breakfast sandwich—with a couple of fried eggs, pepper jack cheese he likes and exactly six pieces of Best Kosher salami on the toasted bread. I really like Hank, we've been friends for 40 years.

Who Knows Happiness in Chicago?

I wondered about how to find enduring happiness. So, I asked the philosopher, who deeply contemplates these things, where we're going, what is happiness, and what's the purpose of aging. He told me to contemplate, in a serious way, not on happiness— but on meaning and purpose. I told him I've never been able to deeply contemplate things, except to earn enough for Esther to put a chicken in the oven on Friday night. Shabbat. I also told him I didn't understand what meaning and purpose meant. He told me to go to Austin Park and watch the Poles and Jews picnic on Sunday. I walked away knowing that kishke, pastrami, white fish, pickled eggs, and pickled turnips is meaning. The Poles ate breaded pork cutlets and meat dumplings, bread, sausages, and sauerkraut. But not the Jews.

Work: A Project Worthy of Analysis

Deprived of meaningful work, men and women lose their reason for existence. --- Fyodor Dostoevsky

Estimates are that we spend a third of our life working, and that doesn't include time we shower before work, eat breakfast or drive to work. Imagine a third of your life dedicated to a craft that truly defines your sense of self. Does work just mean a paycheck? For some, work is more than an activity generating money to sustain life. It may represent an activity that deepens one's commitment to bring meaningful value to the world. If so, then the individual may not value the amount of money their work generates and place more emphasis on how their work improves conditions for others. Also, should work deepen and enrich our lives? How can one begin to determine if and how their work deepens their lives? For some, work provides a deeper meaning where the individual sees how their job contributes something valuable to the world; how what they do makes a difference in the lives of others. In this situation, one's work can be perceived as an activity that matters to the world.

The view of work as instrumental is a traditional American view, a consumerist perspective of work which may or may not fulfill our yearning for meaning and purpose. But is it acceptable if it was just a paycheck? It can be a worthwhile, meaningful activity or drudgery to avoid and escape. Work can be a practical or creative activity expressing your talent. It might be imbued with a moral component. In the end, the work each of us does impacts the world.

The view of work as instrumental is a traditional American view, a consumerist perspective of work which may or may not fulfill our yearning for meaning and purpose. But is it acceptable if it was just a paycheck? It can be a worthwhile, meaningful activity or drudgery to avoid and escape. Work can be a practical or creative activity expressing your talent. It might be imbued with a moral component. In the end, the work each of us does impacts the world.

Work is an activity that partly defines our sense of self. However, work alone does not pull for or engage our total self. It represents one dimension of our multiple identities from which we can draw self-esteem. Work undoubtedly influences how others perceive and think of you. Work shapes you in certain ways by the knowledge and skills you gain. It influences how others see you, how you perceive yourself and how you interact with others. If you make a serious and genuine investment in your development at work, you will bring more value significance to your employer and be appreciated and admired for it. It will generate additional meaning in the work you do, and this represents the highest value you can pursue and validate your reason for existence. Meaning is an elusive and abstract concept. To experience meaning one begins by asking themselves the questions that matter the most to their lives. Ideally, the questions reveal opportunities to pursue the things that matter to us the most; our work, relationships and how to live with significance. In the end, meaning imbues our life with significance and genuine, enduring happiness.

One could define work as an activity performed for economic security and sustenance. In this way, work is conceived as instrumental and a means to an end. In contrast, a quiet voice may visit you one night while in bed directing you to consider work carrying a deeper, inherent value for society? If you pursue this work, you may more clearly see how performing it contributes to enhancing the lives of others.

Americans enjoy work and we are curious about what each of us does for a living. We believe we should work, even if we don't need the money. Our belief that work, in part defines who we are has its origins in Protestantism and is defined as the Protestant Ethic which asserts that work is virtuous, we have a duty to work and for some, it may represent a calling. The individual who works benefits by accomplishing goals and gaining self-worth.

Modern man is drinking and drugging himself out of awareness, or he spends his time shopping, which is the same thing.

--- Ernest Becker