



Meaning and Purpose in the Change Process

Like it or not, just like we have physical and emotional needs, people have a **need for purpose and meaning**

- This need sets us apart from animals
- Just about every human society ever discovered has had some form of search for meaning and purpose
- *Worship*: “to have a reverent honor or regard, to hold something as sacred (special, set apart from the ordinary)” – Consider how many people “worship” something –even if they don’t profess belief in god or a higher power - (money, relationships, job/career, drugs, sex, hobbies, sports, famous people, etc.)

Meaning and Purpose:

- Should be distinguished from less meaningful “day to day” concerns
- Considers more than simply “existing” – It involves looking at “the Big Picture”
- Almost always involves some kind of standards for morality (right and wrong)
- It involves faith (a belief in something)
- These concerns are not black and white, rather there is depth as someone can increase their sense of meaning and purpose with time. This process often involves looking beyond basic concerns about our self
- Considers things like “meaning” and “purpose”, It can examine the “Why’s” and “How’s” of life – It is deeper than simply thinking and believing, it involves learning, examining, studying, testing, understanding, comparing, gaining wisdom, searching for truth, etc.
- It is essential to consider the question “What is truth?” (This involves searching for what is “true” rather than being satisfied with believing in what we want to believe simply because it is comfortable, familiar, or we just like it that way)

Meaning, Purpose, Recovery and Change:

- Addiction/substance use/abuse is often centered around the “me” or “I” - How can I get what “I” need to feel good. What can others do for “me”, etc.?
- Drugs/Alcohol can steal meaning and purpose from life. Changing and getting better involves getting meaning back; often some need to find a totally new purpose for living. If not, relapse or setbacks often follow, or depression or both.



Meaning, Purpose and Change: Questions to Consider:

1. When you consider meaning and purpose, what was your life like when you were using? How did drug/alcohol use hurt or distract your attention to meaning and purpose?

2. What is meaningful now with regard to your personal goals?

3. What is meaningful now with regard to your immediate family, friends and loved ones?

4. Have you changed with regard to how you treat others that you don't know:
 - How have your morals changed and what do you still need to work on from the perspective of doing what is "right"?

 - What changes do you still need to make with regard to how you view others? ...and how you treat others?

5. Where do you stand with regard to your purpose in life? How can you grow in your understanding in this area?

6. What do you believe in? Who/What do you put faith in? What is "true" for you and how do you know? How can you grow in knowledge, wisdom and understanding in this area?