



DEVELOPING 'MEANING' IN YOUR LIFE

This strategy is suggested in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

Helping others for better wellbeing

About developing 'meaning' in your life

The PERMA model was developed by Dr. Martin Seligman, a prominent psychologist and one of the founders of positive psychology. Introduced in his 2011 book, *Flourish*, the model outlines five key elements that contribute to human wellbeing: **Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment**. These pillars aim to help individuals build a more fulfilling life by focusing on strengths, fostering positivity, and enhancing overall happiness and mental health.

Developing "meaning" in your life involves pursuing activities and goals that give a sense of purpose and significance, as well as belonging. A meaningful life is one in which people feel connected to something larger than themselves. Meaning fosters resilience, motivation, and a deeper connection to life, helping you navigate challenges with a clearer sense of direction. By aligning actions with values and contributing to something greater than yourself, meaning promotes long-term satisfaction and enhances emotional health, creating a foundation for a fulfilling, balanced life.

The scientific evidence behind developing 'meaning' in your life

According to Park, Peterson & Ruch (2009), research consistently links the presence of meaning to wellbeing. Individuals with a sense of purpose report greater life satisfaction, more positive affect, higher levels of optimism, better self-esteem, and even better physical health. They are also less likely to have psychological problems.

- Park, N., Peterson, C. & Ruch, W. (2009). *Orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in twenty-seven nations*. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4, 273-279. DOI: 10.1080/17439760902933690.

Regarding 'meaning' specifically in young people, recent findings suggest that purpose in life is an important asset for wellbeing in adolescents and may protect against depression.

- Barcaccia, B. et al (2023). *Purpose in life as an asset for well-being and a protective factor against depression in adolescents*. Frontiers in Psychology. 14:1250279. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1250279.



Further reading on developing 'meaning' in your life

Helping youths cultivate their sense of purpose:

https://developingadolescent.semel.ucla.edu/blog/item/helping-youth-cultivate-their-sense-of-purpose?utm_source=chatgpt.com

How cultivating meaning and direction helps build motivation and resilience in young people:

https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/sense-of-purpose-helps-adolescent-development-resilience?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Cultivating purpose in adolescence:

https://developingadolescent.semel.ucla.edu/assets/uploads/research/resources/CR3_PurposeReport_2023_FINAL.pdf

Dr Martin Seligman's website provides an additional resource of articles, publications and questionnaires to support the promotion of PERMA as a tool for wellbeing:

<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/>