

A Life of Responsibility and Meaning

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“Existential positive psychology can be summed up in one word: Responsibility!”

— Paul Wong

I begin this tribute to Dr. Paul Wong with his own words, as this quote speaks to the essence of his character and life-long work in the scientific study of meaning, purpose, spirituality, well-being, flourishing, and happiness. It is often difficult to find one word to represent our “beingness” in this life, and the way we make a difference in the lives of others; however, I cannot find a better word for Dr. Wong’s life’s legacy—Responsibility, built upon a foundation of Dr. Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, and expanded upon through his education, teaching, lectures, research, and personal experiences. Dr. Wong not only lectures and writes prolifically about Responsibility, but he embodies the sense of Responsibility to life by offering his time, talents, and creative energy through his spiritual and psychological endeavors, inspiring and motivating others with his kindness, his authenticity, his pain, his happiness, and his personal meaning. The way in which Dr. Wong lives with daily Responsibility is what brings him Meaning in the Moment and Ultimate Meaning.

I came to know Dr. Wong when he graciously asked me to participate on a panel discussion several years ago at one of the International Meaning Conferences in Vancouver, Canada. We shared our work and personal thoughts together, and quickly realized that our integrative meaning-centered approaches were quite compatible; weaving Logotherapy throughout our research and models, and standing upon the shoulders of a humble giant, Viktor Frankl. Since then, we continued our friendship and collegial relationship, supporting one another’s research and work in the psychology field. Recently, Dr. Wong generously contributed his words of wisdom and his research in a heartfelt epilogue for one of my upcoming books on Meaning-Centered Palliative Care.

What I most respect about Dr. Wong is his desire to live life authentically, regardless of the challenges, obstacles, or setbacks doing so will possibly bring. As we all know, it can be easy to share our accomplishments and positive aspects of life, yet much more difficult to share our despair, pain, traumas, and tragedies with each other. In Dr. Wong’s social media avenues where he builds bridges of connection throughout the world, he offers us a glimpse into his meaningful thoughts and darkest moments, as a true example of examining the existential aspects of the human condition, and finding meaning despite the difficulties. He motivates all of his followers, colleagues, and students by living life to its fullest potential, being responsible to doing so because of the very gift of life, and moving through the tragedies and betrayals with the same ease and commitment to life as he does through the effortless, happy moments.

Dr. Wong and I share similar sentiments on what a fulfilling, happy life is. That is, a life full of meaning, making a difference in the lives of others in the small and large ways, being responsible to living a life with purpose and passion, being true to our life’s calling, allowing our spiritual essence to shine through in all moments, experiencing the joy and love from family members, friends, colleagues, and “in the flow” experiences, demonstrating our attitude of gratitude during the tragedies and the triumphs, and offering our creativity through sharing our time, gifts, and talents.

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With my respect and gratitude for Dr. Wong's life-giving and life-long contributions to the fields of existential psychology, positive psychology, and spirituality, I am honored to have been able to share a few words to show the impact that Dr. Wong inspires. Thank you, Dr. Paul Wong, for being an example for all, and living your life daily with Meaning and Responsibility, and allowing all of us to share along with you on this journey.