

## **Adventures with Viktor Frankl and Advances in Logotherapy (AEPP01)**

### **Lesson 1: Who is Viktor Frankl? What is Logotherapy and Existential Analysis?**

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#### **Why is Frankl so Important to the Suffering Masses?**

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) lived through the great economic depression, the Holocaust and two World Wars. All through his adolescence and adulthood, he had to wrestle with the problem of human suffering. He even suffered mentally as a precocious child with an inquisitive mind and a very sensitive heart; he was already struggling with the prospect of personal death at the tender age of 4 years old (Krasovska & Mayer, 2021; Frankl, 2000).

Some may question the credibility of this account. Some parents may even worry that their anxious child might need professional help from a physician or a child psychologist. In fact, some of my own clients did consult me, wondering whether there may be something wrong with their child if the child looked sad and was pre-occupied with dark thoughts. To dismiss such concerns, I want to share with you some my own childhood experiences.

Did you know that I too was anxious about death, worrying that my parents might accidentally die when I was still in Grade 2? This death anxiety may be traced back to the trauma of being forced out from our home by Japanese soldiers, with bayoneted rifles pointing at us, when I was only 4 or 5 years old.

Overnight, we became homeless. I was sent to a relative's place that evening, and my siblings were taken care of by other relatives. I spent the night alone in a dark basement on a wooden board infested with lice and bedbugs. All night, I fought against the horror of being alone in darkness and being eaten alive by all the lice. I could not understand why the world could be so cruel and unfair.

As a war baby (born in 1937), I witnessed human tragedies up close and experienced firsthand the terrors of human evil and depravity. You may wonder why I did not grow up with PTSD or other kinds of mental disorders. But my life and my writing prove that suffering can add depth to one's life as it did to Frankl and me. We can both credit our deep insights about the meaning of life to our trauma and suffering.

We are still living in a dangerous world full of suffering: from the carnage of war to the mass killings; from the vast underworld of drug trafficking and human trafficking to the less visible but more dangerous industry-military complex.

In addition, we are living in a toxic materialistic culture in which love for money and indulgence in pleasures have made our soul sick and miserable. This [2017 article](#) about the perils of chasing after money is still relevant and true today (Mathewes & Sandsmark, 2017).

Suffering remains an inevitable and important aspect of life. Frankl (1946/1985) has taught us the importance of wresting meaning from suffering and turning it into human triumph. This transformation requires the courage to embrace suffering, the determination to pursue something bigger than ourselves, and the faith to do the impossible.

All these endeavors cannot be only based on our own efforts and ability without involving the spiritual or noetic dimension. More specifically, we need enlightenment, detachment, and self-transcendence. In other words, we need the wisdom of the soul (Wong, 2023) and the spiritual

laws in order to see the light and be the light even in the darkest hours. Here are the 3 spiritual laws based on Frankl's teaching of self-transcendence...

[END OF LESSON PREVIEW]