

Reflection #36  
By Eugene Dufour

### Searching for Meaning During This Pandemic

Victor Frankl was an Austrian physician and during World War II, he spent about three years in various Nazi concentration camps, an experience that greatly influenced his work and the development of logotherapy, which means “healing by searching for meaning”.

His work was centered on people healing themselves through their search for meaning. Frankl observed that those who were able to survive the experience typically found some meaning in it, such as a task that they needed to fulfill. For Frankl personally, his desire to rewrite a manuscript that had been confiscated upon arrival at Auschwitz was a motivating factor.

After the camps were liberated, Frankl resumed his work as a neurologist and psychiatrist. In 1946, he published *Man's Search for Meaning*, outlining his experiences in the concentration camps as well as the basic tenets and techniques of logotherapy.

This has important implications as we face the COVID-19 crisis. As individuals and as a community there is a deep need to search for meaning if we had a family member die of COVID-19 and the effects of not being able to be at the bed side when someone died and not being able to have a funeral.

As a community we need to reflect on the meaning and purpose of enduring such a long period of isolation. Families facing extreme financial challenges have added pressure to understand the meaning behind that kind of suffering.

Victor Frankl's “meaning therapy” would suggest that we each search for our healthy core and use our internal resources that come from within.

The key to this is that it is more helpful if you can do this search for meaning within a supportive network of people.