

## A Look at Logotherapy By Betsy McLeod

While in Vienna this summer, my classmates and I were privileged to learn about several theories of psychotherapy that originated in Vienna. Distinguished guests shared with us about Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, Jacob Moreno's Psychodrama, and Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy. While all of these therapies are unique in their own ways and have much to offer both clients and counselors, logotherapy in particular stood out to me as an extremely useful therapeutic approach.

According to Viktor Frankl, the original term "Logotherapy" is derived from the Greek word, "*logos*," which is defined as "meaning." The word "therapy" deals with the treatment for disorders and maladjustment ([logotherapyinstitute.org](http://logotherapyinstitute.org)). Logotherapy is based on the premise that an individual's primary motivational force is to find a meaning in his or her life. There are three basic assumptions of Logotherapy:

- Life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable one
- Our main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life
- We have freedom to find meaning in what we do, and what we experience, or at least in the stand we take when faced with a situation of unchangeable suffering

([logotherapyinstitute.org](http://logotherapyinstitute.org)).

Thus, people have problems because they have looked for meaning and have not found it (Vesely). It is the counselor's job to enter the client's world and discover what that person cares about, so that the client can find the meaning in his or her life.

Frankl identified three ways by which individuals can find meaning in their lives:

- Creativity/doing

- Experiencing
- Change of attitude (Vesely).

Creativity is defined as giving something to the world through self-expression, such as one's work or special talents. Experiencing refers to receiving from the world, whether through nature, culture, relationships, or interactions with others and the environment. The third way to find meaning, change of attitude, is exactly what is says. Even if a person cannot change a situation or circumstance, that person can choose his or her attitude toward the situation. Change of attitude is often a self-transcending way of finding meaning, especially in unavoidable suffering (voidspace.org).

Logotherapy, which can seem very philosophical on paper, was made more real to me through experiences in Vienna. Our speaker on the topic was Alex Vesely, practicing logotherapist and grandson of Viktor Frankl. Additionally, we able to meet Elly Frankl, Dr. Frankl's widow. We spent time with her in the apartment in which he had lived and practiced for much of his career. Hearing Elly speak of her husband and his work helped me understand that logotherapy is more than a therapeutic technique to help people overcome their problems; it is a way of living and being that was exemplified by Viktor Frankl during his life and continues to be demonstrated by his wife today.

#### References:

“Introduction to Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy”

<http://www.voidspace.org.uk/psychology/logotherapy.shtml>, accessed 27 August 2006

“Logotherapy and Existnetial Analysis”

<http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/logotherapy.html>, accessed 27 August 2006

Vesely, Alex. Presentation at the Flow House in Vienna, Austria. 6 July 2006.