

Key Takeaways From “Finding Meaning in an Imperfect World” by Iddo Landau

- People are usually intense or passionate about what they take to hold much importance or value
- We all ultimately disappear and are forgotten, there is no real difference between the life of the wise and that of the fool
- Meaningfulness has to do with value or importance
- If we accept that people can be wrong in the evaluation of specific aspects of their life, it would be inconsistent to believe that they cannot be wrong in their estimation of the overall worth of all of the aspects of their life
- We can not be wrong about the meaning of our lives
- The relation between meaning and value suggests that the degree of meaning in life can be decreased or increased
- If we want to make an insufficiently meaningful life more meaningful, we should look for what is valuable and try to enhance it in our lives
- We do not believe that if something genuinely interests us it will always do so
- If we can succeed in remembering that we are going through a crisis - a temporary low in which we have to persevere and struggle until things become better again - we can frequently regain or recreate meaning
- It is untrue that if something is meaningful in our life, we would want to devote all our time to it so that if we do not want to engage with only that particular thing, it cannot be seen as really constituting the meaning of our life
- One can enjoy a meaningful life but still be bothered with problems in some, even many, aspects of one's life
- The meaning of life is just one more value
- Meaning is a normal aspect of life
- In order to be meaningful, lives must show difficult or exceptional achievements
- All that is beautiful is difficult
- A meaningful life must consist in realizing ambitious and difficult plans
- What makes our life meaningful is the achievement of excellence
- Cruelty is one of the worst evils one can engage in
- When we consider the meaning of life we should not see ourselves only as operating in the marketplace or as competing and heed not only competitive value
- We may have helped other people considerably by allowing them to live much-improved lives through our moral, medical, or scientific contributions
- Death is not only the great equalizer of people but also the great equalizer of all aspects of life

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Taken directly out of the book

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- Death and annihilation do decrease the meaning of life
- A finite life may have a value that is not absolute, yet nevertheless substantial and sufficient because things can be temporal and valuable
- We find significant solace if we know that the time that they had was used wisely
- Although death and annihilation diminish worth, they do not destroy it completely
- The value of the acts and experiences one has in that finite life so that a life in which there are many sufficiently meaningful acts and experiences can be meaningful in spite of its finitude
- The parable does not show that death makes life meaningless but only that meaningless activities make life meaningless
- Life has both terrible and wonderful aspects. Neither should be denied
- To a witness with the whole of space and time in its view, nothing on the human scale will have meaning
- Adopt a narrower perspective that examines life only in the context of the here and now
- We do not choose freely to do what we do
- Everything that happens has a cause or a group of causes, that determines that it be the way it is
- We are certain that there are always cause that cause things to be precisely as they are, even if we sometimes do not know the causes
- Because we cannot, and never will be able to, achieve complete certainty- knowledge is always tentative and could be proven wrong one day- we should not aim at absolutely certain knowledge, nor consider everything short of certain knowledge as worthless
- We should periodically reexamine what we value, thus diminishing the likelihood of making mistakes
- What is valuable or meaningful does not have to be objectively valuable or meaningful
- A life, like anything else, may be of much worth even if it is not geared toward and does not serve any ulterior purpose
- I do not enjoy myself for a certain end or purpose. I just enjoy; it is worthy in itself
- We do not have to be here for a reason in order to have a meaningless life. We can have a meaningful life, in the sense that it includes enough aspects of sufficient value, without there being a reason why we are alive; we are here, and our life is high of value, even if there is no special reason for our coming into the world

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- A life may be meaningful, that is to say, of sufficient value, even if one does not metaphorically go from one point to another but instead inhabits one or a few places in a valuable way
- For many, lives are meaningful because they include many activities and experiences such as those having to do with intellectual understanding, aesthetic enjoyment, humanitarian activity, courage and persistence in the face of difficulty and unavoidable pain, or emotional contact
- One enjoys less what one obtains than what one hopes for
- Things won are done, joy's soul lies in doing
- There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it
- The end is not valuable in itself; its value lies in giving significance to our efforts to achieve
- The worthlessness of our ends, and therefore of the means to attain them, make our lives meaningless
- It is simply not the case that the worth or meaning of all goals disappears after they have been achieved
- A meaningful life need not be completely and wholly meaningful
- We are built psychologically so that after we have been exposed to something ceaselessly and for a long time, our pleasure or interest in it often wanes; in some cases, we stop noticing it
- We have some control over what happens to us and can use this control to increase our pleasure
- We are much more sensitive to what is unpleasant than to what is pleasant
- Everything we do is based only on the egoistic urge to increase the ratio of pleasant to unpleasant feelings we experience
- Seeing the good as good
- Perfectionism is one major cause for people's blindness to the goodness and value to be found in their and others' lives
- It is wise to create or maintain the circumstances that bring out the best in us and to change or keep away as much as possible from circumstances that bring out the worst in us
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- We should pay attention not only to whether we are being falsely cheerful but also to whether we are falsely cheerless

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- It is realistic and helpful to recognize and enjoy what is good in life, including the good in our own character and our achievements
- There are many things we should change and improve about ourselves, and these things should be noted and corrected, not hidden. But it is important to recognize the good in ourselves as well, not only criticize what is bad
- Many people lead insufficiently meaningful lives because they hold wrong suppositions about meaningful lives, or endorse perfectionism, or accept arguments suggesting that life can never be meaningful
- What would make your life more valuable or meaningful?
- Which elements in your life do you already take to be meaningful?
- What should be removed from your life in order to make it more meaningful?
- What characteristics of other people lead you to consider them as having meaningful lives?
- In the face of death, we may well be glad that we did not miss out on the small joys of life
- Life is not eternal and hence that we should make good use of it and see that we do not waste it
- We should opt not for the most meaningful life possible but for the most meaningful life possible for us
- Engaging in helping others makes a significant difference for the better in their own lives
- The other activity that can impart a great deal of worth to the lives of many is avoiding or decreasing their own suffering and increasing their own pleasure
- Those who succeed in identifying what makes them discontented and what makes them contented, and act on those findings, are likely to feel significantly more meaning in their lives
- Some people value enjoyment too much and fail to pursue what they know will make life meaningful because continuing what they have been doing is more comfortable and fun
- We should not pursue only what is fun in life without giving any consideration to other issues of worth
- When a certain direction does not prove sufficiently meaningful, people should acknowledge their mistake and consider their options anew
- The changes are not in us but in the circumstances in which we live
- We are more sensitive to what is unpleasant than to what is pleasant
- The fact that one senses meaning in one’s life is in itself a good and valuable thing that increases meaning in life

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- The mistake is rather in failing to see the worth that persists in so many ordinary things, ignoring an important part of reality
- We are often as sorry to lose things that we have had and that have been invisible to us for a long time as we are over failing to achieve what we do not yet have; sometimes we are even sorrier about the losing
- Many walk the paths of life as if blind to much of what is meaningful; they misperceive, or ignore, important aspects of reality
- One increases meaning in life by introducing into it new value
- We can frequently increase considerably the meaningfulness of our lives without achieving anything new at all, just by recognizing what we have
- For those who want to increase or maintain the meaning of life, it is often helpful to try to find or build a community
- Although we are not absolutely free when it comes to the physical and material circumstances in which we find ourselves, we are completely free in our feelings and thoughts about them
- Those who take life to be meaningless feel that there is a gap between their expectations and reality: a gap between the degree of value that life should have and the degree of value that it actually does have
- Maintaining or increasing meaning should also include an element of letting things be, trying things out and following intuitions, using what is already there and enjoying it, and in some cases only making some small, sensitive changes that tune up what already exists and is good
- If it is impossible to achieve something, do not try to achieve it
- Do not ignore the good just because not everything is good
- This is not a dress rehearsal
- We have one opportunity to live a meaningful life, and it is a great pity to waste it
- Do not be cruel to yourself