

Title: TEACHING THAT ENCOURAGES MEANING DISCOVERY

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Program Objective:

This program will introduce the principles of Logotherapy and explore the meaning of meaning. The presentation is planned to be interactive through the use of modeling and activities.

Program Proposal:

Frankl (1988) believes that a lack of meaning is responsible for the recent, frequent phenomenon of “emptiness” or “existential frustration”. The “empty self” a self responding to the current cultural mileau, a self devoid of community, tradition, and shared meaning prompts students to seek emotional experiences through chemicals and relationships. They are unwilling to worry through difficult problems.

We are paying the price for the empty self by the vast number of educational dropouts, individuals who do not value education, who openly scorn the current educational system. Frankl (1988) suggests that when an educational system fails to provide appropriate levels of tension (expectations) students are likely to create it either in healthy or unhealthy ways (sports, drugs, etc).

A culture lacking community and tradition, a culture producing empty selves, may need to experience a paradigm shift to fill the vacuum. This may be a new role for education. Teachers may need to help develop aspects of students’ character by helping them discover a sense of meaning in their education and life, teaching them about the realities of emotional courage, empathy, and respect for self and others.

To counter the problems created by continued meaningless (existential vacuum) experienced by a large number of youth regardless of socioeconomic level, ethnic origin, or success/failure; it is proposed that those who have the responsibility for working with our youth closely examine the tenets of Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy. Frankl translates *logos* as “meaning” and asserts that our basic motivation is not to find pleasure, happiness, or power, but to find meaning in one’s life.

Frankl, V. E. (1988). *The will to meaning: Foundations and applications of Logotherapy*. New York: New American Library.

Rice, G. E. & Taylor, G. E. (2002). *The peanut butter and jelly guide to teaching*. 5603 Bon Aire Drive, Monroe, LA: ETSI, Inc.