

Is there an innate need for meaning?

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[Optentia](#) News 13 (1) 15

In positive psychology, it is generally assumed that we have an innate need for meaning and that we are therefore happier the more meaning we see in our life. Is this theory supported by empirical evidence?

It is at first sight. There perceived meaning in life appears to be strongly correlated to satisfaction with life and that correlation is universal. However, the correlation can also be due to an effect of happiness on perceived meaning, if you are happy you are more inclined to see meaning in your life and a qualitative study found that a lot of people see meaning in leading a happy life. What is more, a lot of people appear not to care about the meaning of their life and are still reasonably happy. So, the quest for seeing meaning in one's life is apparently not universal and nor very pressing.

The fact fit better with the view that the quest for meaning is that it is a consequence of human cognition, self-awareness in particular. Because we know that we are, we tend to wonder why we are and whether our life serves any other good beyond our own life. Though these questions come to mind, we can apparently live without convincing answers.

Sameer, Y, Eid, Y & Veenhoven, R (2022) [Perceived meaning of life and satisfaction with life](#): A research synthesis using an on-line findings- *Frontiers in Psychology* Section Positive Psychology, 2022, 13:957235