

# Mindset of Overcoming Adversity

Jacob Molitor, Officer & Founder

*“Everything can be taken from a man, but one thing; the last of the human freedoms-to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” - Viktor E. Frankl*

## **Jewish Psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl**

By 40 years old, Viktor lived through WWI, WWII, and spent three years as a Nazi prisoner between four concentration camps including Auschwitz. **He lost his parents, wife, and brother in the Holocaust;** he and his sister were the only survivors of his family. Over six million Jewish people were killed and only 1 in 28 prisoners survived the camps (3.5%).

The adversity Viktor faced would have reasonably destroyed most individuals, but Viktor used his horrific experiences toward an excellent cause. His teachings of having purpose in life will be forever treasured in the world of psychology. Viktor’s 1946 book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, was written with the intent to remain anonymous. Before it was published, he was convinced to change his mind to give his book credibility.

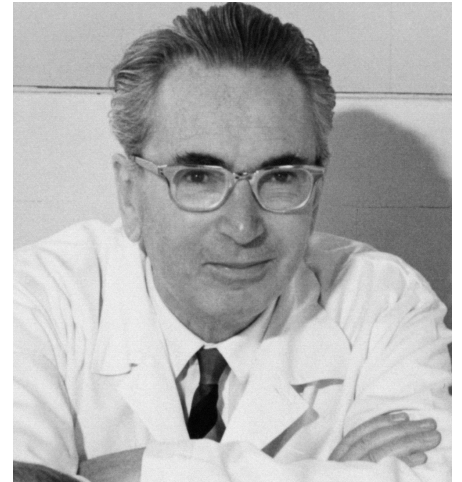


Photo Credit - Prof. Dr. Franz Vesely

Viktor acknowledged that the journey of each person is unique, but said we all have a choice of how to view our own set of circumstances and the ability to move forward in a productive manner. Viktor said **“humor and curiosity had the ability to detach the mind from its surroundings with objectivity as a means of protection”** in the concentration camps.

Viktor found human kindness in all groups, even those, which as a whole, would be easy to condemn. Viktor and the other prisoners were profoundly moved by the smallest acts of kindness received from the staff. One day, a camp foreman secretly gave Viktor a piece of bread that he saved from his breakfast. It was far from a small piece of bread, which overwhelmed Viktor

with tears. He said his reaction was based on the human “something” the man gave him; the “word and look” which accompanied the gift.

Viktor said prisoners who had nothing more to expect from life were able to commit suicide. He said the key to preventing suicide was **getting them to realize that something in the future in life was still expected from them**, such as their child waiting for them outside the camp walls. A related message Viktor explained was that **nobody else could take the rightful place of a father in his child’s affections. This uniqueness and singleness distinguished each individual and gave meaning to existence.**

Viktor’s purpose to survive the camps was to complete his writings. He said **“a man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears towards a human being who affectionately waits for him or to an unfinished work will never be able to throw away his life.”** Viktor said **one who knows the “why” for his existence will be able to bear almost any “how.”**



**Source: Viktor E. Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning**