

Meaning in Life Reflections

A Qualitative Analysis



Darren Aschacher

Applied Psychology, Concordia University of Edmonton

Reflections on Experiences Study



Researchers:

Dunnigan Folk & Maya Pilin, *U of BC*

Dr. Holli-Anne Passmore & Darren Aschacher, *CUE*

Hypothesis

Do people derive less meaning from activities or experiences in which they **failed to meet their expectations** of success compared to activities or experiences in which they **met or exceeded their expectations** of success?

Participants: N= 215

Concordia University of
Edmonton Students

Two Conditions:

1. Met Expectations $n=108$
2. Did Not Met Expectations $n=107$



Independent Variable

Do we find more meaning in success?

Or when we are not successful?



Dependent Variable (Measures)

- Meaning, Significance, Value (scale of 1-10)
- To what degree do you think this activity or experience . . .
Was dear to you? Made sense to you? Played a broader role in
your life? (7 point Likert Scale)
- Presence of Meaning in life questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006).

Qualitative Analysis

1. Place/Setting	2. Effort	3. With	4. Specific Activities
1a) School	2a) Short-term (days/weeks)	3a) Individual	4a) Physical Activities
1b) Work	2b) Medium-term (months)	3b) Group	4b) Music/Art
1c) Sports/Rec	2c) Long-term (years)	3c) Both	4c) Studying
1d) Relationships			4d) Projects
1e) Other			4e) Volunteering
			4f) Working

5. Social Aspects	6. Outcome	7. State	8. Obstacles
5a) Helping Others	6a) Positive	7a) Positive Social	8a) Inner
5b) Romantic	6b) Negative	7b) Positive Motivation	8b) Outer
6c) Teamwork	6c) Both	7c) Positive Emotional	8c) Both
		7d) Positive Cognitive	
		7e) Positive Feeling	
		7f) Negative Social	
		7g) Negative Motivation	
		7h) Negative Emotional	
		7i) Negative Cognitive	
		7j) Negative Feeling	

7a) Positive Social

Love, relationships, connected, team, help, support

7b) Positive Motivation

Confidence, drive, strong, effort, goal, expectation, dream, accomplish, hard work, improve, success

7c) Positive Emotional

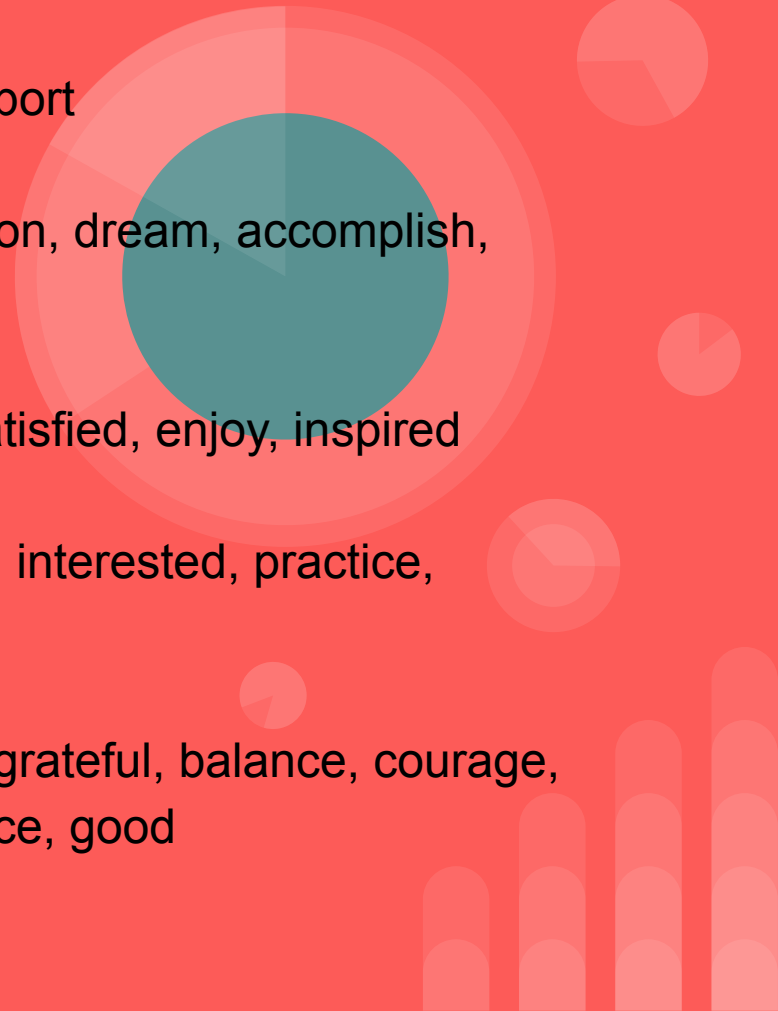
Joy, happy, fun, excitement, excite, amazing, satisfied, enjoy, inspired

7d) Positive Cognitive

Engage, learn, dedication, rewarding, prepared, interested, practice, devoted, determined, focused, creativity

7e) Positive Feeling

Hope, confidence, proud, relieve, calm, peace, grateful, balance, courage, passionate, pleased, best, comfortable, safe, nice, good



7f) Negative Social

Excluded, left behind, antisocial

7g) Negative Motivation

Discourage, fail, quit, frustration, give up, goal not possible, not achieved, stopped, struggled, hard time

7h) Negative Emotional

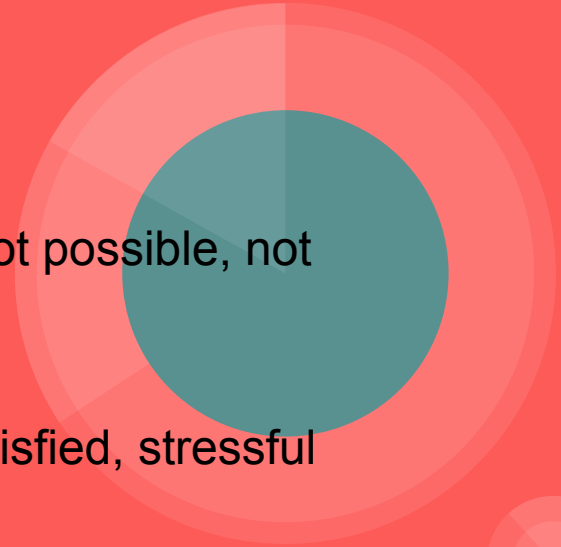
Sad, disappointed, unhappy, devastated, not satisfied, stressful

7i) Negative Cognitive

Pressure, doubt, not focused, let down, procrastination, concerned

7j) Negative Feeling

Pain, suffered, ashamed, upset, anxiety, nervous, depressed, regret, felt terrible, hurt, not passionate, fear



Example: Met Condition

"I was a ski patroller in Edmonton for a few years and the last year I was able to use my knowledge and training to help others when they struggled or had a hard time on the hill. It always was a good feeling when I would save the day, but when it was a quiet day on the hill I would practice my skiing ability and try to improve my time of how fast I can get to a certain location. The friends that I made were equally as amazing as saving others. The friends are amazing people that we can all learn from each other and there was never any judgment. It has been an experience that I will never forget and I hope to continue this as long as I possibly can."

Example: Met Condition

"I was a ski **patroller** in Edmonton for a **few years** and then I was able to use my knowledge and training to **help others** who were struggling or had a hard time on the hill. It always was a **good feeling** when I would save the day, but when it was a quiet day on the hill I would practice my skiing ability and try to **improve** my time of how fast I can get to a certain location. The friends that I met were equally as amazing as the ones I was saving others. The **friends** are **amazing** people that we can all **learn** from each other and there was never any judgment. It has been an experience that I will never forget and I **hope** to continue this as long as I possibly can."

2c

7a

7e

1b, 4a

7b

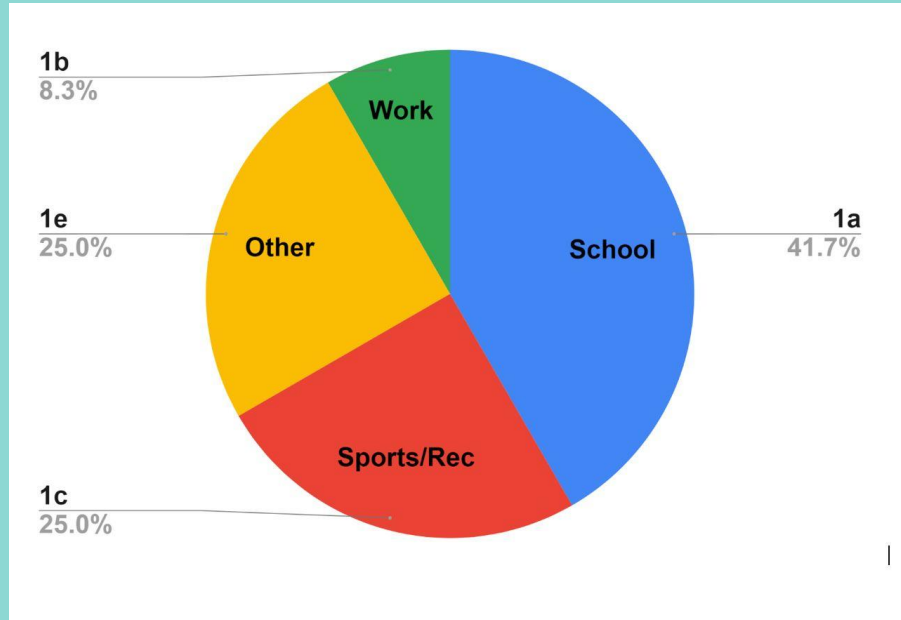
7c

7d

7a

7c

Some interesting findings . . .



Met Condition: Most Frequent States

7b) Positive Motivational - **67**

Confidence, drive, strong, effort, goal, expectation, dream, accomplish, hard work, improve, success

7d) Positive Cognitive - **65**

Engage, learn, dedication, rewarding, prepared, interested, practice, devoted, determined, focused, creativity



Not Met Condition: Most Frequent States

7g) Negative Motivation - **80**

*Discourage, fail, quit, frustration,
give up, goal not possible, not
achieved, stopped, struggled, hard
time*



Insights from the Met condition . . .

“I am more grateful for the hard times I had.”

“It is a passion of mine
that has driven me for
years and years . . . an
unbelievable feeling.”

*“... assured me to trust in the
universe, everything happens for a
reason”*

*“I made lifelong
friends”*

“I AM JUST REALLY PROUD OF
MY ABILITY TO ADAPT AND
PERSEVERE”

Insights from the Not Met condition . . .

*“ . . . ultimately learned
from the experience.”*

*“I never reached my
expectations, but I didn't quit.”*

“ . . . I think failing was what I
needed to get on the right path.”

“ . . . lesson learned.”

“ . . . BUT IN THE END IT ALL
WORKED OUT.”

“ . . . turned out not
to be the end of
the world”

Meaning in Life Reflections

Thanks for listening!

Questions? Comments?

daschach@student.concordia.ab.ca

