

# COVID-19: Whoever had a “why” faced any “how”?

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## Short Communication

In history, there are countless victims of hunger, violence, wars, extermination, natural disasters, and epidemics. These are historical events of humanity that leave a lasting imprint on the individual experiences directly or indirectly. The most recent global occurrence was the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Fischer, et al. [1], brings the understanding that people who experience traumatic events, such as war, tend to process their experiences according to their meanings: if there is coherence in the meanings, the suffering is usually temporary. However, when there is an inability to integrate traumatic events into their existing beliefs, these people can begin to see the world in a distorted way. About the meaning of life and suicidology, Viktor Frankl discussed the insertion of spirituality into psychotherapy and questions about the Meaning of Life [2]. He was a psychiatrist and had a particular interest in studying depression and suicide, against the background of his personal story when he was a prisoner in the Nazi camps between 1941 and 1945, where he was liberated weighing twenty-five kilos, losing his pregnant wife, his mother, and his brother in the camps. As a prisoner, Frankl used the words of Fredrich Nietzsche to discover the meaning of staying alive: Whoever has a “why” faces any “how” [3]. This author’s work offers a glimpse of the post-war period, where problems of unemployment, feelings of anguish, loss of family members and social crisis are experienced, and everyone’s subjective sense of self rises emotionally [1].

The COVID-19 pandemic made the entire world population work internally with their frustrations, and find meaning in life,

some people found a new hobby, others changed jobs, others even lost their jobs, some found a great love, others lost, each one sought someone to be loved or something to behold [4]. The Frankl’s theoretical model [2] understanding that the meaning of life helps to prevent the risk of suicide. This author identified suicidal thoughts in his studies with prisoners in the North Vietnamese camps, although he had previously collaborated with people who showed suicidal behavior. In addition, when Frankl himself had suicidal ideation, he elucidated an internal confirmation that his survival depended on orientation: whoever has a “why” faces any “how”. In traumatic situations, the “why” and the “how” are existential motivators, reasons to stay alive.

With due proportionality, the experience of isolation caused by the pandemic, where “people were prisoners” in their own homes, and the associations with Frankl in this article, prompt the reflection that “even in slavery and imprisonment, humans do not lose hope. “Researchers Fischer et al., [1], examined aspects of subjective meaning in life in relation to post-traumatic stress and depressive symptoms in a sample of 191 veterans. They found that the greater the meaning in life, the less severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depressive symptoms. By analysing the results of the present study, we can understand the light of what Frankl said, that, no matter how many consequences a War leaves, the way people believe in a meaning of Life, that is, having a “why” and “how” helps to face a certain adverse situation. Online interventions contributed to less intense psychological suffering associated with pandemic

stressors [5]. The implementation of more accessible therapeutic interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic [6], such as the online modality, reflects the ability of technology to overcome geographic barriers to mental health care, being relevant to assist individuals living in remote or urban areas with severe mental disorders like a PTSD, anxiety, substance Abuse, depression and prevention risk of suicide [7]. The people with high levels of meaning in life have (1) less negative affect on stressful days, (2) it is compensatory in depressive symptoms, (3) it promotes stress regulation and (4) it is a facilitator of adaptive and flexible coping [1]. Working on the meaning of Life with people in social isolation related to pandemics, demystifying taboos and warning signs of suicide risk, guiding the population about services that offer help, training on the importance of strengthening the support network, as important factors for developing resilience, spirituality, improving quality of life and preventing suicidal behavior. Expert researchers have already warned humanity about possible future pandemic social isolation. The challenge for mental health professionals is to help people create meaning within themselves and the meaning of each person's life, having a why and how in the face of any adversity that may occur.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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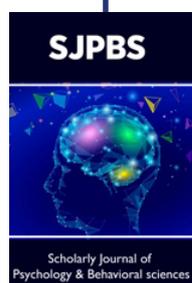
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