



The Meaning and Purpose of Human Existence

Science asks how; philosophy and faith ask why

How and why

Science asks how

- How the universe began
- How life and minds work
- What we can test and measure

Philosophy and faith ask why

- Why there is something rather than nothing
- What we ought to do
- What gives life purpose

Some answers people have proposed

Tradition	Source of meaning
Many religions	A relationship with God and living by divine purpose
Aristotle	Living well by developing good character
The Stoics	Virtue and accepting what you can't control
Existentialists	Meaning is something each person creates
Viktor Frankl	Purpose, love and courage, even in suffering

These are summaries; each tradition is much richer.

What research finds



Close relationships

The strongest predictor of a happy, healthy life



Purpose

A reason to get up in the morning



Helping others

Service builds meaning for the giver



Gratitude

Noticing what's good changes outlook

Sources: Harvard Study of Adult Development; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

Remember

Science explains how the world works; finding why it matters is a question each person and tradition answers.