

# Positive Living

## NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017

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### EDITORIAL

## INPM's Work & Organization Division

[Luis A. Marrero, M.A., RODP, LLP](#)



Early this year, the International Network on Personal Meaning (INPM) Board of Directors approved the creation of a new Division – Work and Organization (WOD). The Division started as an interest group during the INPM's 2017 Conference in Toronto, Canada. Sponsored by Dr. Gordon Medlock and Luis A. Marrero, those who showed interest in the initiative selected officers, formed a mission statement, and clarified roles. The WOD Executive Team is now setting up its long-term strategy. Here are details about the new Division.

### **INPM Work and Organization Division Mission:**

*Conduct scientific research and establish best practices that enhance the quality of*

*meaning in work. Support and develop individuals, teams, organizations, and societies to thrive.*

#### **The Executive Team:**

- **Ken Howard:** Chair
- **Shizuka Modica:** Vice-Chair
- **Alice Ballantine Dykes:** Secretary

We will profile the Executive Team in greater detail in the upcoming July 2017 INPM Positive Living Newsletter. We will also detail the specific areas of work, and upcoming initiatives. Please join us in congratulating the new Division Executive Team and its members! We are excited about having Ken, Shizuka, and Alice at the helm of the WOD.

This publication also profiles INPM Board Member Daniel Jordan. His article “Meaning as a Unifying Philosophy: How an Addiction Program Successfully Integrated PTSD Treatment Thanks to Its Meaning-Centered Model” includes a short video on the concept of “threat to meaning” and insight on how a residential addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment facility (Sunshine Coast Health Center) uses a meaning-centered approach.

Ken Howard, WOD Division Chair—and aligned with the WOD Mission—writes about the role of meaning within organizations, particularly faith-based institutions. In his article “Minimum Viable Belief: Exploring the Role of Transcendence Meaning in Individual Motivation and Organizational Culture,” Ken shares how, in his model, “Meaning influences almost every aspect of learning motivation.” I look forward to more of Ken’s articles, as well as of others within the WOD.

Our INPM President and Founder, Dr. Paul Wong, has benefited us with his article, “Courage, Faith, Meaning, and Mature Happiness in Times of Suffering.” Paul explains the role of Mature Happiness in times of uncertainty and a disheartening political and social setting. I read it not only out of intellectual curiosity, but also as part of my own search for a courageous and meaningful response to the difficult times we currently face on this planet. You too can benefit from Paul’s words.

Finally, we would love to hear from you about the articles published, and would like to encourage INPM Members to submit papers and articles for publication in the Positive Living Newsletter by sending them to <mailto:Luis@Bosontimp.com?subject=Positive%20Living%20Newsletter>.

Enjoy your May 2017 Positive Living Newsletter.

Luis A. Marrero  
Editor, *Positive Living Newsletter*

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#### **PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

## **Courage, Faith, Meaning, and Mature Happiness in Dangerous Times**

[Paul T. P. Wong, PhD, President, INPM](#)



*“The wound is the place where light enters you.” — Rumi*

The current tense political climate at home and abroad has the same feeling as the dreadful days after 9/11, which injected a tragic sense of life into the American psyche. Perhaps we have never truly recovered from that national trauma, and today’s malaise indicates that “a sizable chunk of the country is in a sour mood. Our politics are unusually disheartening. There’s still a hole in the American heart” (Weber, 2016).

In a similar vein, Marr (2016) observes that:

Before 9/11, I lived in a world of optimism. The future seemed bright. And then in an instant everything turned dark, the future hazy and ominous. Now we live in a world of danger. People thrive on dystopian fiction. Terror attacks are common. Young people scoff at how naïve we were back then.

### **Is Positive Psychology Also Guilty of Naïve Optimism?**

Positive psychology in its early stage of development shared the same naïve optimism of the American culture (Ehrenreich, 2009). I still have a very vivid memory of the first International Positive Psychology Summit, which took place in 2001 at the Gallup Center in Washington less than one month after 9/11. I can still sense the tense atmosphere at Maryland Airport, teeming with security guards and soldiers armed with semi-automatic machine guns.

During the conference, the elephant in the room of 9/11 could be felt in many conference sessions as well as during informal conversations in the hallway, because this event posed a real challenge to the fledgling science of positive psychology. Conference attendees were wrestling with the obvious question: What is positive psychology’s response to 9/11? There were no ready answers, especially at the time when almost all positive psychologists still believed that positive psychology was a science of happiness for an age of peace and prosperity.

### **Why Do We Need Tragic Optimism and Mature Happiness?**

Coincidentally, my presentation at the conference was entitled *Tragic Optimism, Realistic Pessimism, and Mature Happiness* (Wong, 2001a). It was based on my research on Viktor Frankl’s concept of tragic optimism (Frankl, 1985; Wong, 2009a; Wong et al., 2004) and the perspective of existential positive psychology (Wong, 2009b). My talk explicitly advanced the notion that positive psychology’s

answer to suffering and trauma is a mature, deep kind of happiness resulting from tragic optimism—faith in the potential of transforming tragedies into triumphs.

In fact, I argued at the conference that only through embracing a tragic sense of life—with all its inevitable suffering, fragility, and brevity—can we develop a deep, mature happiness characterized by inner peace, contentment, meaning, acceptance, and the feeling of being connected with God; this is very similar to lay people’s understanding of happiness in many countries, as reported by Delle Fave et al. (2016).

Right after the summit, I briefly described a new equation of this mature happiness (Wong, 2001b). This present article elaborates on the role of existential courage, faith, and meaning in developing a mature happiness, which is widely known in countries that have experienced a lot of suffering and trauma. I do hope that this existential positive psychology’s response to dangerous times is helpful to my INPM family and beyond...

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



The poster features a background image of a large waterfall with white water cascading over rocks. In the upper center, the INPM logo (a square with 'I' and 'N' stacked above 'P' and 'M') is followed by the text 'Summer Institute'. Below this, the main title 'HOW TO HARNESS THE POWER OF MEANING' is written in large, bold, black capital letters. Underneath the title, the text reads 'Intensive Workshop on Integrative Meaning Therapy' and 'July 22-23, 2017 | Toronto, Canada | 12.0 CE Credits'. A teal horizontal bar contains two circular headshots of Dr. Paul T. P. Wong and Dr. Lillian C. J. Wong, with their names listed in white text between them. At the bottom of the poster, the website 'meaning.ca/conference' is displayed in orange text.

**Intensive Workshop on Integrative Meaning Therapy**

**EARLYBIRD DEADLINE JUNE 15**

INPM's Summer Institute | 12.0 CE Credits | July 22-23, 2017 | Toronto, Canada

Take advantage of this rare opportunity to spend a weekend with Dr. Paul Wong. Learn how to...

- Employ an integrative pluralistic approach to best meet your client's unique needs;
- Apply existential competencies to address meaning-in-life issues in counselling/supervision;
- Use numerous evidence-based existential positive interventions; and

therapy, CBT, ACT, and positive psychotherapy.

Receive an optional 12.0 CE credits and a certificate of completion in partial fulfillment of Diploma in Meaning Therapy and Meaningful Living Facilitators.

*This workshop is primarily for mental health professionals, such as psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors, social workers, and coaches. Mature lay people interested in becoming Meaningful Living Facilitators are also welcome.*

Scholarships are available upon direct request from [Dr. Paul Wong](#).

[Learn more and register »](#)



## International Meaning Conference 2018

Preparations have begun for the 10th Biennial International Meaning Conference, happening the summer of 2018 in Vancouver, BC!

**Take a SHORT SURVEY to rank variations of the proposed conference theme:**

- Courage, Faith, and Meaning: Existential Positive Psychology's Response to Adversity
- Virtues of Courage, Faith, and Meaning: Existential Positive Psychology's Answer to Adversity
- Courage, Faith, and Meaning in Adversity: Existential Positive Psychology's Answer to Dangerous Times
- Virtues of Courage, Truth, and Responsibility in Dangerous Times: Addressing the Current Crisis of Polarization and the Search for Shared Meaning and Purpose
- Courage, Faith, Meaning, and Mature Happiness

[Access the survey »](#)

## Recent Media Coverage of Dr. Paul T. P. Wong's Research

1. Campanella, E. (2017, January, 15). Why you should search for meaning instead of happiness this year. *Global News*. [Read it here.](#)
2. Palermo, E. (2017). Quest for a meaningful life. *The Link*. [Read it here.](#)
3. Xu, Y. J. (2017). Hunluan shidai, ruhe zhaodao rensheng yiyi? [The how of meaning in turbulent times]. *UK Chinese Times*. [Read it here.](#)

FEATURED ARTICLES



## Minimum Viable Belief: Exploring the Role of Transcendent Meaning in Individual Motivation and Organizational Culture

Ken Howard, M.Div., M.Ed., Founder of FaithX

In both my first career in human and organizational development, and my second career in ordained ministry and the formation of faith-based communities and organizations, a large part of my work has centered on the role that transcendent meaning plays in individual motivation and the development of organizational culture.

In the late 1980s, I published an article in *Adult Education Quarterly*, entitled “A Comprehensive Model of Expectancy Motivation.” The intent of this article was to provide a more complete understanding of what motivates individual learning in an organizational environment by describing how personal meaning affected learning motivation.

At the time of the article’s publication, prevailing learning theories viewed learning motivation largely as a mechanistic response to external rewards. Some had gone as far as to include the valence (i.e., value or meaning) of the reward to the learner. Yet none had proposed approaching it in a more organic and systemic way.

My article set out to develop a more holistic model in several ways...

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## Meaning as a Unifying Philosophy: How an Addiction Program Successfully Integrated PTSD Treatment Thanks to Its Meaning-Centred Model

Daniel Jordan, Director, Sunshine Coast Health Centre

As director of a residential addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment facility, Sunshine Coast Health Center, I am often asked why our program adopted a meaning-centred approach. The meaning-centred model is powerful, not just in how it fully engages clients in therapy, but also how it accommodates multiple disorders and allows therapists to incorporate multiple evidence-based treatment modalities.

Consider our experience at Sunshine Coast when the Canadian military began referring soldiers and veterans with PTSD. At Sunshine Coast, addiction is posited as a response to a life that lacks meaning and purpose. In other words, addicts use drugs and alcohol because, as Narcotics Anonymous likes to say, life has become boring, monotonous, and meaningless. When clinical management at Sunshine Coast considered the most commonly-used approaches to PTSD treatment, such as Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and exposure therapy, we knew from previous experience with manual-based treatment that clients diagnosed with co-morbid...

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