

Are You Wondering How to Deal With An Existential Crisis?

Are you in a funk? Do you feel trapped in life? You might be in an undesirable job, relationship, or other situation that you seem unable to break free from, leaving you feeling discontent, disillusioned, or resentful.

Are you searching for meaning or perhaps wondering how to deal with a midlife crisis? You might be considering a big lifestyle change like a move, new relationship, or career change but lack the confidence to go through with it. On the other hand, you might have already pursued and accomplished a goal—such as getting married, having kids, buying the house of your dreams, etc.—which was supposed to make you happy, but failed to deliver.

Do you ever wonder if there is more to life? You might feel directionless or lost. If you have unrealized dreams or think you haven't been living up to your potential, you might also feel regretful or even guilty.

Have you lost interest in things you once enjoyed? You might shy away from social gatherings or struggle to get out of bed in the morning. If so, you might wonder, “Am I depressed?” If you lack strong connections with others, you might also feel lonely (even if you have plenty of “friends” on social media). Despite how isolating it can feel to question your life's purpose, though, you are not alone.

Existential Struggles Are Part of The Human Condition

As human beings, we long for many things that we cannot have. Despite the incomprehensible nature of

existence, we seek understanding, meaning, and purpose. We fear death but have no way of avoiding it. From the moment we're born, we learn to rely on others despite how difficult it can be to build and maintain relationships.

Modern technology exacerbates this disconnect between what we long for and what is possible, particularly regarding our relationships. Esther Perel, MA, LMFT has said, with great sadness in her eyes, that [the first thing most of us touch](#) in the morning is not our spouse or partner, but our cell phone. I share her sadness and agree that the quality of our relationships determine the quality of our lives. Our in-person interactions have been replaced by digital media to such a degree that our youth are actually at risk of [losing the ability to read facial expressions](#).

Our culture's false promises about how to find meaning and purpose likewise set us up for disappointment. Many of us adhere to culturally-mandated notions of fulfillment, such as the accumulation of knowledge or prestige, or the goal of getting married/having kids. It can take years to recognize that we have mistakenly adopted someone else's dreams or desires. This experience is so common that we've labeled the occurrence a “mid-life” crisis.

Our own mortality means we have limited time in which to reach our full potential. But the myriad of options available to us—and a persistent fear that we might choose the wrong path—can be paralyzing. Only by cultivating a greater understanding of our own desires and limits can we come to terms with our collective situation and, despite its limitations, find joy and fulfillment.

What Is Existential Therapy?

Unlike other forms of counseling, existential therapy isn't about addressing serious mental health issues or helping you recover from a recent event or crisis. It's about coming to terms with the "givens" of existence: death, isolation, meaninglessness, and freedom, and finding happiness and fulfillment despite those limitations.

If you're feeling stuck in life, we can explore how you can rediscover your own autonomy and accountability. For example, if you've been showing up to a job you hate for the last decade, we'll explore whether fear, limiting beliefs, or negative self-talk may be holding you back from either wholeheartedly embracing your current situation or pursuing a more fulfilling life path.

If you're not sure what you want out of life, we can look into what may truly make you happy. To identify the activities most likely to satisfy you, I can help you identify times in the past when you've experienced a state of effortlessness, inspiration, and focus. We'll then brainstorm how to incorporate the activities that put you into what [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#) labelled a "flow" state, even if it means breaking out of your comfort zone or trying new things.

We are social animals. The psychology of attachment theory clearly shows we need connections to be happy and fulfilled in life. Going it alone is not in our best interest as humans, so I'm likely to challenge you to make changes that expand your social connections. Depression and isolation can become a vicious cycle, but you can break free from this existential isolation.

I'll help you tap into the power of your own volition by inviting you to examine any cultural, social, or internal expectations that might have led you to compromise your own happiness. I'll encourage you to reconnect with what YOU want and what makes YOU happy, even when it could mean defying others' expectations (or your own).

As you consider existential therapy, you may be thinking. . .

I'm functioning pretty well, and my life situation is pretty good. Do I really need therapy?

If your life looks good on paper and you're not experiencing severe depression or some other major mental health issue, you might not recognize your existential funk as being worthy of attention. Feeling directionless and cynical might also lead you to conclude that nothing can be done about your situation. This attitude has led many people to stick with the same routine, year after year, only to look back with regret. Therapy can help you avoid that regret and provide life-changing benefits, even if you feel like you don't necessarily "need" it.

Existential therapy seems less scientific than other kinds of therapy. How will I even know if I'm making progress?

It's true that there is no universal, objective way to assess the outcomes of existential therapy because it involves working with the most subjective thing on the planet—humans. For most clients, the feeling of progress becomes self-evident as they develop greater confidence, self-awareness, and autonomy. Each person finds meaning in this seemingly meaningless world in different ways. That said, you'll know you've made progress if you can answer “yes” to questions like these: “Do I feel happier and more fulfilled? Am I more authentic, present, and in touch with myself? Am I more empowered to pursue what makes me happy?”

Therapy is expensive. Is it really worth it?

Therapy can help you make better choices and get more satisfaction out of your important life decisions. More than 2,000 years ago, Socrates wisely said that “an unexamined life is not worth living,” and I believe that's still true today. It's something I continue to work on in my own weekly-therapy. A lousy life is a high cost to pay in exchange for failing to act. The value of having a fulfilling life that aligns with your goals and authentic personality is worth more than you could ever spend in therapy.

Live Life to The Fullest

Getting out of a rut can be difficult, but it's much easier with the fresh perspective and sympathetic ear of a caring and knowledgeable therapist. I have undergone years of classical training and personal therapy in existential-humanistic therapy (as advocated by renowned therapist James F. T. Bugental, PhD), and I have 30 years' experience as a licensed therapist helping others look at how they can live an existentially authentic life. I would look forward to helping you set aside your doubts and live your best life. Feel free to visit my [contact page](#) to set up an initial appointment and determine if we would be a good working team.

Courtesy of:



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