



LIFE: Search for Meaning

# Survey of Coverage

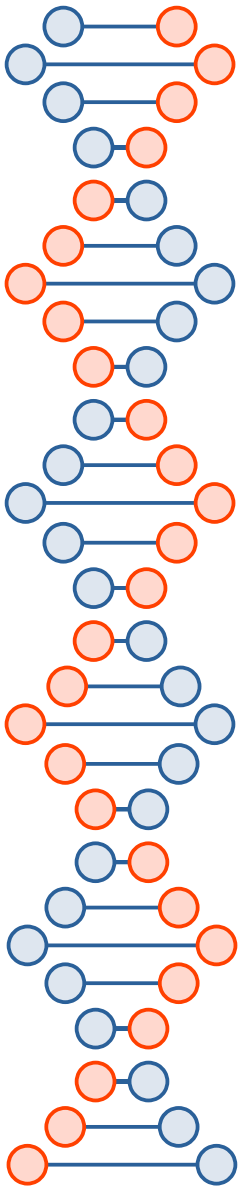
Bob Fabian

<http://fabian.ca/meaning>



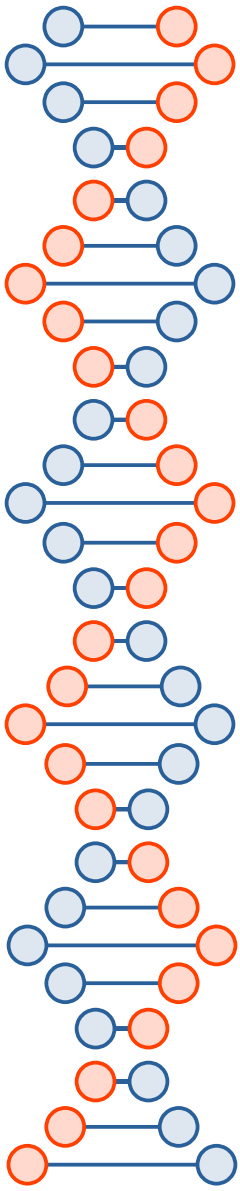
## Initially: Four Key Points

- All of the “eternity” explanations depend on faith. And you either have faith or you don’t
- Personal meaning depends on the nature of “self”, and the “self” is now seen as embodied and embedded
- Meaning is particularly important for today’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Age members, important for society and for the 4<sup>th</sup> Age
- Useful to reduce the question to “What are fit purposes in my life?” (And the answer can change over time.)



# Suggestions

- What Does It Mean to Be Self-Actualized in the 21st Century? ([Scientific American article](#))
- The School of Life ([YouTube video](#))
- Living an Examined Life ([YouTube video](#))
- Albert Camus on happiness, unhappiness, and our self-imposed prisons ([newsletter](#))



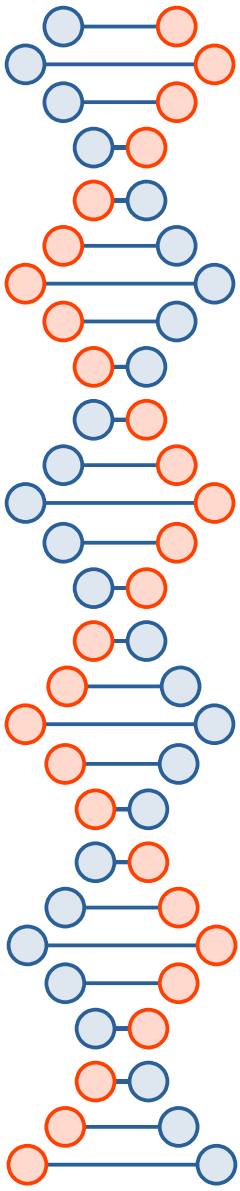
# Actual Coverage

- The answerable questions
- When the questions are asked
- Reality of the “self”
- What motivates us
- Ikigai, the process
- Reality behind meditation
- Personal position ...



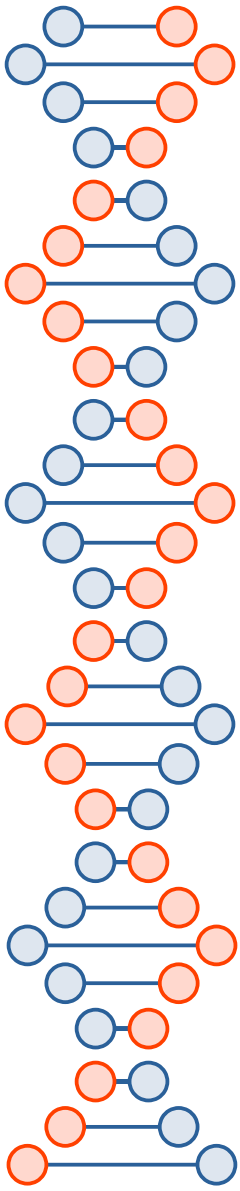
# Answerable Question

- What's *the meaning of life*?
  - **The** assumes there's at most one meaning
  - **Meaning** requires an out-of-this-world perspective
  - **Of** implies everything in life is to be covered
  - **Life** is not sufficiently specific (individual, species, planet, universe)
- Better questions:
  - What is a fit purpose in my life?
  - What contributes to meaning in my life?



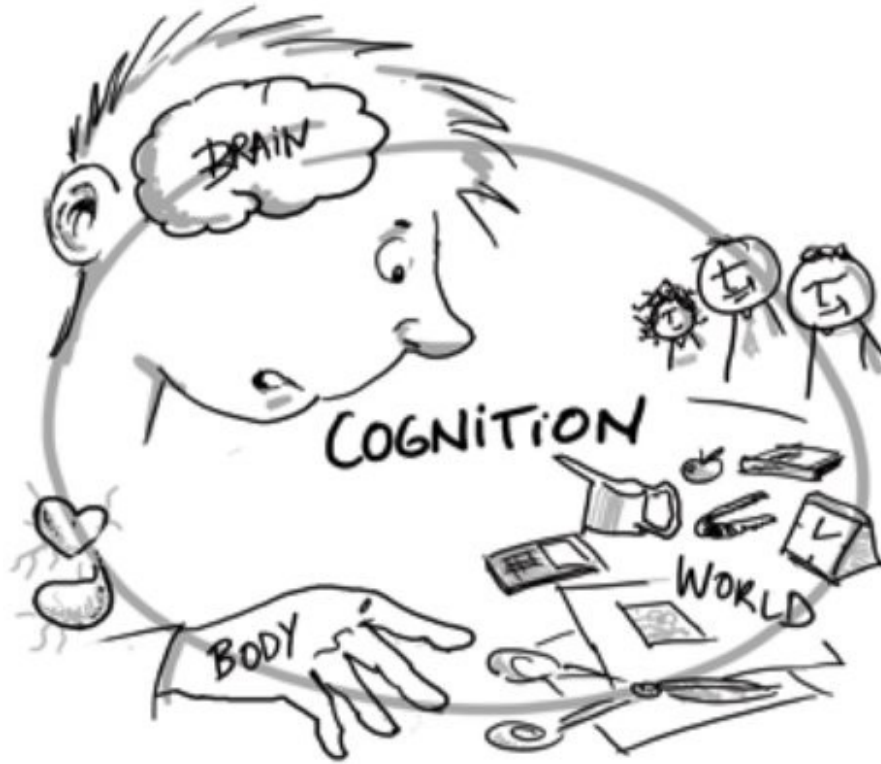
# 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Questions

- “Meaning” questions can be important as you are growing up.
  - Back then I took an “enlightened hedonism” position
- The questions return as we enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age
  - We’re largely free to do as we will,  
but what should we be doing?
- Will be important to society to have people look beyond the immediate to what would benefit society
  - No one is better positioned than those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age

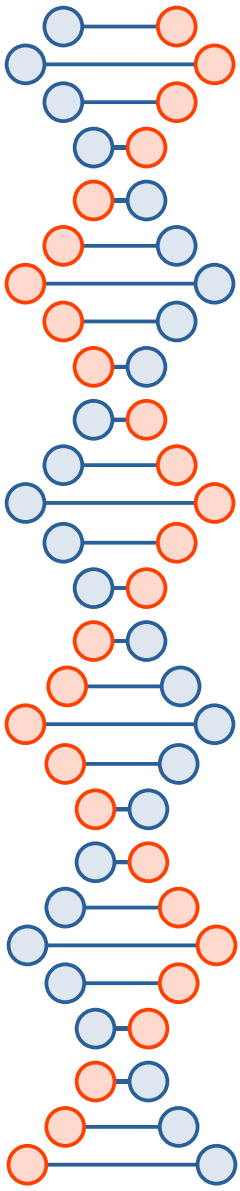


© Jelle van Dijk EMBODIED COGNITION: THREE FLAVORS

# Self



Sketch of the Embodied Cognition perspective. Cognition emerges from interactions between brain, body and the physical- and social-environment



<https://pmhealthnp.com/pmhnp-topics/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs/>

# Motivation I

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Note: Not strictly hierarchical

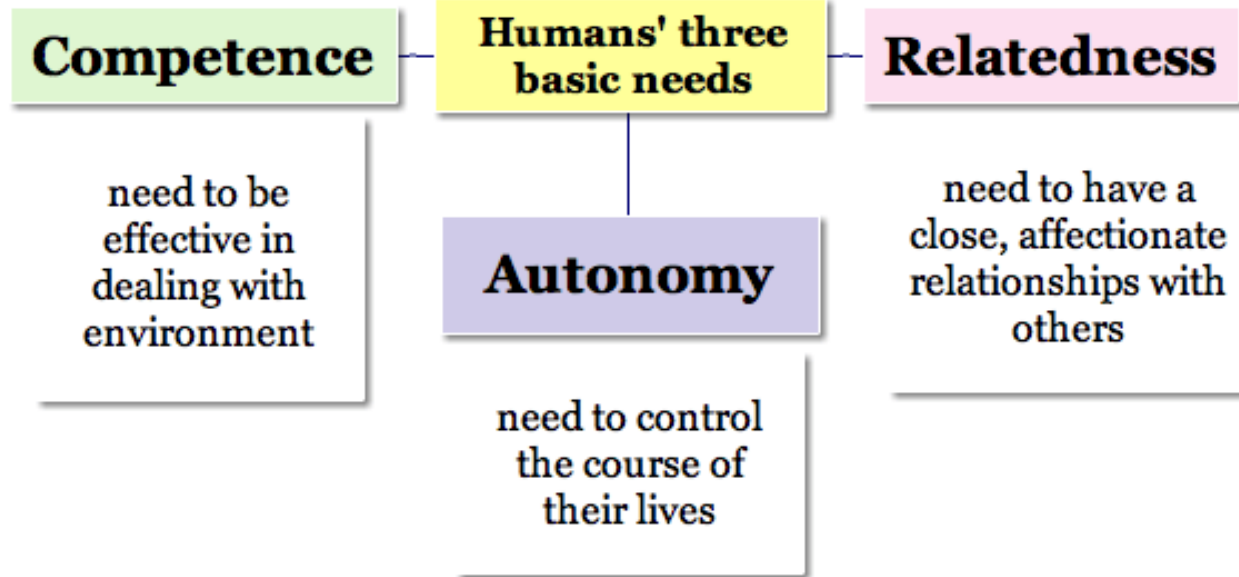




<https://positivepsychology.com/self-determination-theory/>

# Motivation II

## Self-Determination Theory

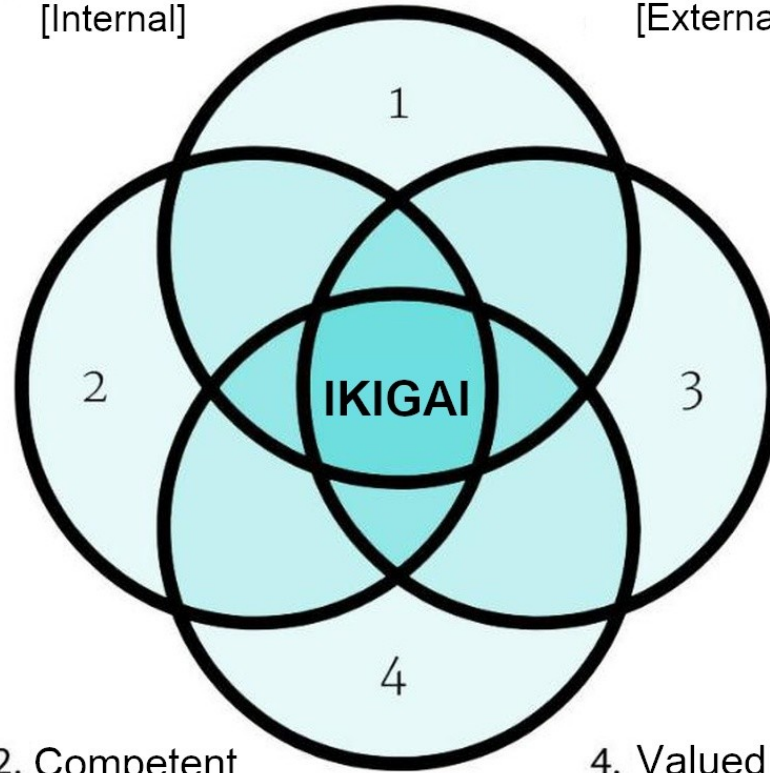




# Ikigai

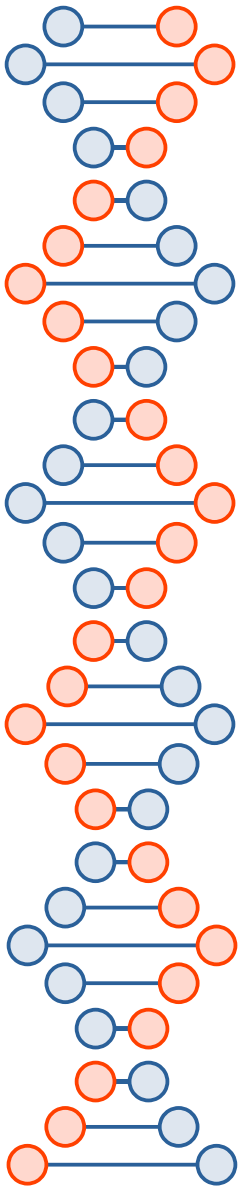
1. Engaged  
[Internal]

3. Needed  
[External]



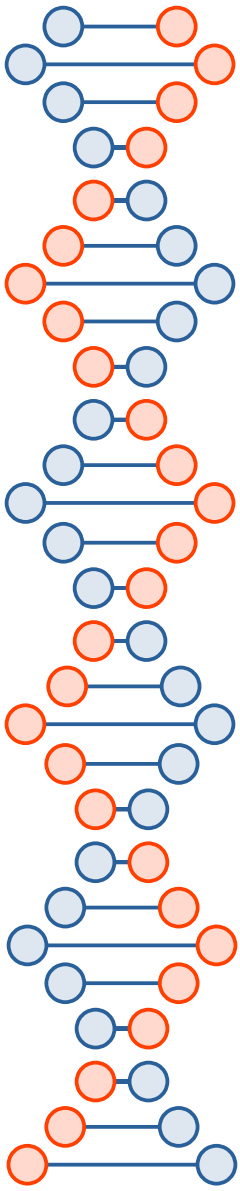
2. Competent  
[Internal]

4. Valued  
[External]



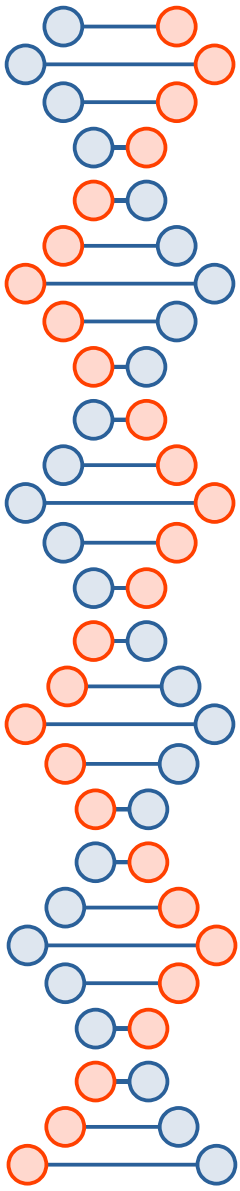
# Meditation

- “Meditation can be an effective form of stress reduction and has the potential to improve quality of life.”
- “Authentic meditation enables one to focus on the present moment rather than dwell on the unchangeable past or undetermined future.”
- “There is little qualitative evidence comparing one meditation technique with another.”
- Noted: “There are a number of case reports in the mainstream medical literature describing occasional adverse psychological and physical effects. [They] range from mild to severe.”
  - *Why Meditation?*, Ramesh Manocha, Australian Family Physician, Vol. 29, No. 12, December 2000



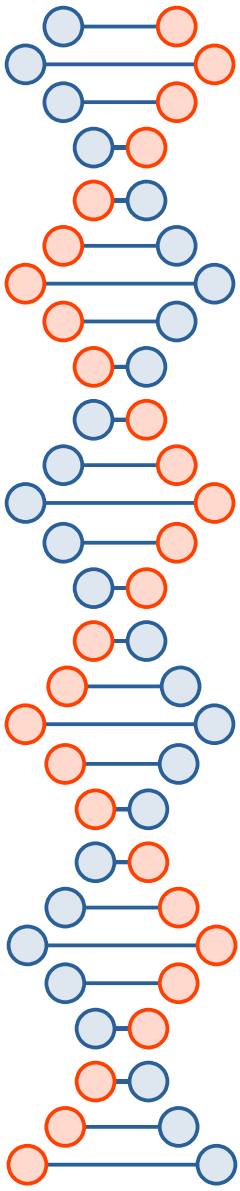
# Tentative Personal Conclusions

- The right approach to meditation may lead to an increased sense of well-being, but the results are not guaranteed (and could be negative).
- The looking-to-the-future aspect of meaning or purpose will not be covered by any commonly practised meditation technique.
- The reported deep inner peace of meditation can be achieved (by some) through the arts [works for me with music]



# Personal Position

- Giving back to “communities” important to me is a fit purpose in my life.
  - “Community” should be read as “social, aesthetic, physical or conceptual environment”
  - Collective judgment of the people in each environment will allow a non-personal assessment of the value of my contributions
  - Because “eternity” defines the ground, the magnitude of a contribution is unimportant
  - And personal contributions will echo into the future, ... not immortality, but a (fading) presence after death



# Over to You

- What did you gain from our conversations?
- What should we have covered, but didn't?
- What would have improved our conversations?
- Are there other topics that could be the focus for LIFE “Conversation” courses?
  - Deeply moving classical music
  - Places that touched me deeply
  - Etcetra
  - Etcetra ...