How do we solve the meaning puzzle?

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When one psychologist’s research shows that finding meaning is as easy as breathing, while another psychologist claims that meaning is too complex, too subjective to be studied scientifically, you have to conclude that these two psychologists probably talk about two entirely different kinds of meaning.

The lack of consensus about a comprehensive definition remains the biggest obstacle to meaning research. By the same token, our over-reliance on simple rating scales presents another obstacle to meaning research, because raters may equate meaning in life with happiness or their understanding of the cultural stereotype of meaningfulness.

This current issue, which was largely based on the invited addresses of the last Meaning Conference 2012, captures both the vitality and tension in meaning research. It is worth reading for all those who are serious about meaning-oriented research and interventions.

I want to draw readers’ attention to the lead article by the late Dr. Christopher Peterson for two reasons. First, like most of his previous research and publications, Peterson’s paper presents a balanced and nuanced view of the positive psychology of meaning. Secondly, this may probably be the last academic paper he wrote because he passed away unexpectedly shortly after submission of this paper.

Finally, I want to apologize for the delay in publishing this important issue. I have been in and out of the hospital three times. I am grateful that I am now healthy enough to catch up with the important task of writing and editing. May you find more treasure and inspiration in the pages of this issue.

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