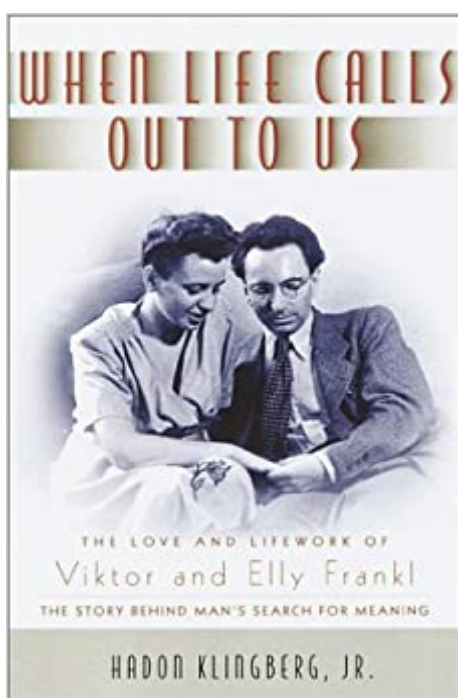


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# When Life Calls Out To Us: The Love And Lifework Of Viktor And Elly Frankl



## Synopsis

“The only authorized biography of Victor Frankl, whose life story and reflections have inspired tens of millions. Haddon Klingberg records and preserves the Frankl legacy, with his own eloquent and moving reflections.” -- David G. Myers, Hope College, author of *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* Written in response to the horrors he experienced and witnessed during the Holocaust, Viktor Frankl’s landmark book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, has sold millions of copies and been translated into twenty-seven languages. But although Frankl’s thought and philosophy have been widely analyzed, until now little has been written about his life, and about the deeply loving, intensely spiritual relationship that led him and his wife to dedicate their lives to reducing pain and oppression in the world. In a book that is at once a wonderful love story and a tribute to two extraordinary people, Haddon Klingberg, Jr., draws on a wealth of anecdotes, told to him by the Frankls themselves, to describe their separate early lives and their fifty-two years as husband and wife. Returning to Vienna after spending three years in four different concentration camps, Frankl, whose first wife and family died in the camps, turned to writing as a way of finding some purpose in his life. But it was Elly Schwindt, a woman half his age, who helped him put the pieces of his broken life together. Married in 1947, the Frankls created a life of hope and faith, a life committed to proclaiming the oneness of the human family, challenging materialistic values, and encouraging the pursuit of meaning. *When Life Calls Out to Us* chronicles a spiritual journey infused with tragedy but sustained by love, wisdom, faith, and humor. Klingberg’s extensive interviews, not available anywhere else, reveal the full richness of the Frankls’ lives and beautifully illuminate their enduring contributions toward a better world for all people.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After three years in four concentration camps during World War II, Jewish neurologist Victor Frankl returned to Vienna to resume his medical practice. When he met an operating room assistant named Elly, it was "love at first eyesight," and over the next five decades, their romance, described in *When Life Calls Out to Us*, helped inspire the development of Frankl's famous philosophy of logotherapy. For this book, the Frankls cooperated fully with author Haddon Klingberg Jr., a psychologist who conducted hundreds of hours of interviews, extensively researched the Holocaust, and mastered all of Frankl's primary publications (most notably *Man's Search for Meaning*). Unfortunately, Klingberg is also gaga for his subjects, fetishizing every detail of their lives. (Victor loved Captain Kangaroo and MacDonald's cheeseburgers "minus the mushy bread.") Readers already enamored of the Frankls will likely be entranced by the book; the rest may wish Klingberg had better emulated the linguistic skills of his hero, whose text, he says, were "sophisticated, yet precise and plain. No pointless words. No petty chatter." --Michael Joseph Gross

For more than five decades, Viktor Frankl's memoir of his Holocaust experience, *Man's Search for Meaning*, has introduced his method of existential psychotherapy, or logotherapy, to millions of readers. Imprisoned in various concentration camps, Frankl survived degradation, despair and suffering by focusing his mental powers on his life's meaning and purpose. Having lost the manuscript of his first book while in the camps, Frankl spent his time constructing words and sentences as a way of making meaning. Psychologist Klingberg, a friend and confidante of Frankl, offers an intimate chronicle of the psychotherapist's life and work. A precocious reader, by the age of 15 Viktor was corresponding with Freud. By the time he was 19, he had published his first major paper in a psychology journal. We also learn about Viktor's unquenchable thirst for women and his early promiscuity. While Klingberg chronicles Frankl's life from birth to death (in 1997), the centerpiece of the book is Viktor's relationship with his second wife, Elly. His first wife died in the camps and, shortly after his own liberation, while he was serving as a doctor, he met Elly, a nurse in the same hospital. She provided Frankl with the spiritual strength and vision and love that enabled him to produce *Man's Search for Meaning*. Through numerous interviews with the Frankls, Klingberg reconstructs their life together from the time they met to Viktor's death in his 90s. Dedicated followers of Frankl will welcome this biography, but Klingberg's pedestrian prose, turgid

style and hagiographic treatment will present struggles for even the most earnest readers. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

As one of Dr. Frankl's medical students at the Poliklinik in 1948 I found this book of great interest. It is well written and detailed. Although I had always admired Frankl for not falling victim to hate after his concentration camp experiences I was unaware of the profound influence his second wife Elly (the first wife, Tilly, died in Bergen-Belsen) had in his recovery from the tragedies and the help she had given him in the propagation of logotherapy. Anyone who is familiar with some of Frankl's book will enjoy reading about the fascinating and colorful personal lives of these two truly extraordinary people. Dr. Klingberg is to be congratulated for his efforts in making them available to us.

I have read many Frankl books and you could feel him in this one even though he didn't pen it. A book that is worth reading.

VF is a hero of mine and that is why I wanted to read this biography. I was made to wade through way more information about the author's experience of writing the story than I could appreciate.

To those of us who cut our "self-awareness teeth" on Freud, Rogers, Adler and Maslow, Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning" was a much-welcomed counterweight, jerking us forcefully back to a common reality about our humanity. For three decades we had watched the pendulum swing from a "human potential movement" run amok (that is from the pursuit of self-esteem projects and self-fulfillment ideologies at all costs and for their own sake. to self-awareness projects such as EST and (for me) "Life Spring," both of which were also self-absorbed self-actualization projects). But stripped of their psychological affectations, they were little more than just another form of individualism at all costs but called by yet another name. The swinging of the individualism pendulum was a morally blind and tawdry affair, with the worse infractions being committed by those in the "pay-as-you-go-mega churches," in which religionists were asked to be all they could be and make all they could make in God's name. The results of having desperately grasped at these straws of individualism at all costs are now in. And now we cannot fail to recognize them for what they are: the cause of the now familiar social meltdowns of boredom, loneliness, obsessiveness, greed, promiscuity, addictions, abuse, divorces, violence, and the ultimate collective penalty, loss of community. In short, extreme individualism in pursuit of happiness no matter who it may hurt, has not worked very well for our society. To Frankl the promise of such "individual" happiness on the

cheap was always an empty pipe dream, if for no more reason than that it is an integral part of the Existentialist creed that in order to remain whole man must confront and deal with life's unpleasantness wherever it is found. And as this author makes clear, for Frankl, post-concentration camp happiness could not be purchased on the cheap, but to the extent it could be purchased at all, had to be earned day by painful day, through life's front doors. That all people are capable of immense evil as well as extraordinary good is just a fact of human nature that is too often ignored. According to Frankl, we are all saints and scoundrels in-waiting. The basic fallacy of modern man seems to lie in ignoring this fundamental axiom of human nature a flaw that Frankl sees as being built into human character. According to him, the flaw in man lies not in racial doctrines or political ideologies, but in the ease with which he can be seduced by tyrants who promise: privilege, protection, prosperity, advantages, pride and honor all in the name of particular tribal affiliations. According to Frankl, "the ordinary German" was not responsible for the holocaust (and his misery), but a baffling and deadly fusion of human factors in which human character was too easily influenced by Hitler's appeal to these inherent human weaknesses. For Frankl, there was no "twelve-step program" for overcoming the holocaust. And as was the case when he was near death in Auschwitz, meaning had to be fashioned on the fly, from within the depths of one's own suffering. Suffering through Frankl's eyes thus is not to be seen as one of life's discards. It sits at the center of human experience. And as Frankl's life is testimony to, one of the truest measures of human character is man's ability to summon up from the depths of despair, enough human spirit to fashion from the debris of suffering a reality full of meaningfulness. For those of us who have learned to live by and through the philosophy, prescribed by Frankl's "Man's Search for meaning," and its instrumentality, Logotherapy, the love story told here between Victor and his second wife, Elly, reflects the maturing of Frankl's soul, and the drawing out of the main themes of logotherapy. Kleinberg, from his own prodigious interviews, and his own reflections as a Psychologist, has made this book a feast for all true humanists. It covers not just Frankl's Holocaust experience, but also and especially the arc of his life from his childhood and the time spent as a neurologist, to his darkest days in four German concentration camps, to his life with his second wife. Theirs was a true love story, of sharing between a wise older Jewish man and a vibrant and dedicated younger Catholic woman. One of the key points of this book is that Elly proved to be the "rock" that got Frankl through his post-concentration malaise, and on to writing his most famous book. And as a result, is responsible for returning him to a full and productive life in the aftermath of the war. And while, arguably the prose does not quite rise to a level that does the great man justice, it does fill in the blanks about Frankl's precocious childhood, in which he corresponded regularly with Sigmund

Freud from the age of 15; as well as the highlights of Frankl's life as a much respected Viennese Neurologist before the Nazi's took over - as well as his robust sexual philandering throughout life. But the most important part in my view was not Frankl's personal idiosyncrasies, but the way the author "zeroed-in on" Frankl's philosophy of life carefully distilling the most prominent themes that eventually shaped his Logotherapy. If man is a "meaning producing machine" as existentialist psychologists tell us we are, then Kleinberg chronicles of how Frankl went about the business of producing meaning in his life, in every life situation: from those in which his survival was under immediate and constant stress and assault (such as when he was in four different German concentration camps), to those in which due to clutter, ennui, irrelevance, and overpowering feelings of emptiness, meaningfulness in his life was no less equally at stake. In today's world of glitz, bling, botox, and "cash and carry" religion, if life is to be enjoyed to the fullest, Frankl's ultimate message is that: we always must be in control of the meaning that affects our collective reality. This message, Frankl's way, although steeped deeply in its existentialist roots, offers an alternative route to meaning, sanity and moral responsibility. As the author notes, Frankl's existentialist philosophy has always had a definite life-affirming quality, a quality that arguably eludes contemporary Existentialists. The fundamental truth in Frankl's cosmos is that reality is about love, the love of wife and family: In Frankl's worldview, love is the common denominator of human existence and the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Thus, man's salvation is only to be found in and through love. When a man has nothing left in this world, he still has the bliss of his own thoughts about his beloved. In the end that is the kind of richness in one's own inner life that is beyond the grasp of society's ability to manipulate. Love is the equalizer: It allows man to enter the insulated world of the poets, of the artists and of the innocents. So that even in the most absurd, painful and dehumanized situation, as Frankl found himself in, in both Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, man can still "construct his way out, " through a mental "worm hole" of his own creation, fashioned entirely of his own reality of meaning: a web of thoughts walled off from outside control or manipulation. And thus even life's most intense suffering can be imbued with deep and life-affirming (and life-saving) meaning. Five stars

In a materialistic and narcissistic generation the words of Frankl are desperately needed to guide them to understand that true love and happiness only comes when self is forgotten, money is a means to help others, suffering is inevitable but must not be avoided but accepted..used as a means for helping others without judgement....I am convinced that Frankl's ideas and living each of these shows us the answer to a deeper love and a deeper life.....I have taught over 30 years. More

and more I see a loss of personal responsibility, money used for a means to feel superior, and a growth in self-centeredness. As a result teenagers lack a direction, a compassion, an understanding of others feelings....an apathy....My prayer is that we can bring this generation and their parents the understanding of Frankl's knowledge of how to find that life does expect something from them and by following this they will be richly rewarded....Life, with all the suffering and joy is to be embraced and shared.....It's simple but not easy at times...I just love this book and others by him...

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