

L 7. Psychology of life meaning and professional self-determination



Meaning in life is a concept that has been widely studied in psychology.

In recent times, it has emerged to be a significant construct in positive psychology as well as cognitive psychology.

Nowadays, meaning in life has been viewed as a multidimensional, refined construct, and described in many ways.

Some of the ways in which meaning in life has been suggested to be derived from are –

- *making significant contributions to the society;*
- *being concerned about the welfare of others;*
- *being able to overcome suffering and emptiness;*
- *having purpose in life;*
- *feeling coherence;*
- *feeling significant in life.*

Meaning in life has been conceptualized as

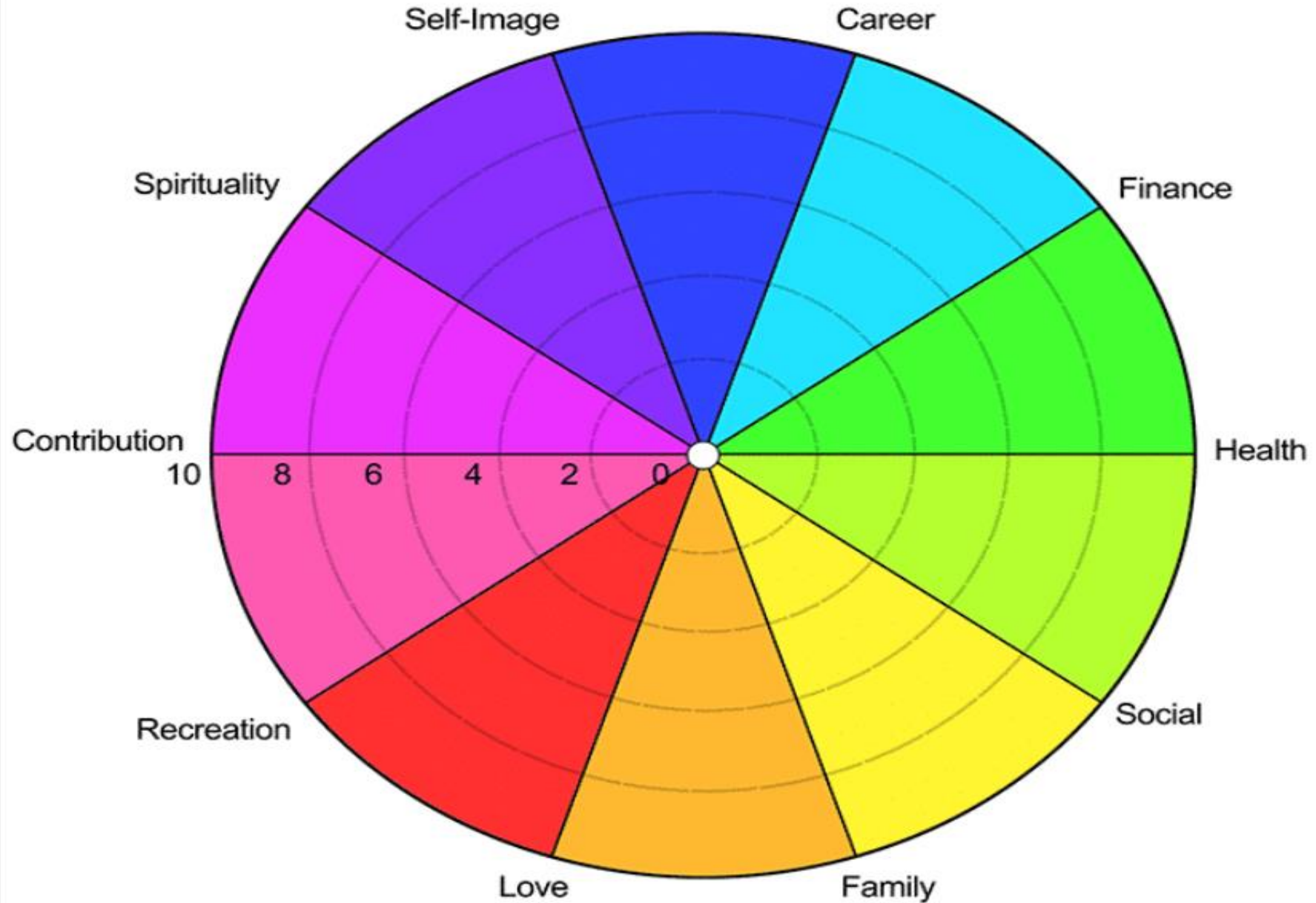
- a coherent sense of **identity, an understanding of the self, the world, and life in general, goal-directedness, or a sense of purpose in life;**
- a cognitive construct that helps in discovering **significant aspects of life;**
- associated with **positive emotions, increased self-esteem, lesser depressive symptoms, and a greater sense of wellbeing;**

Over the years, different psychologists have given their perspectives on the concept of the meaning in life. These differing perspectives help in getting a better understanding of the concept of meaning in life.

Some concepts of Life Meaning

Asceticism	The denial of physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal. Example - any religion reasons, fasting.
Hedonism	Claims that human behavior is determined by desires to increase pleasure and to decrease pain. Pleasure can include any intrinsically valuable experience like reading a good book.
Eudemonism	Equates happiness with the human ability to pursue complex goals which are meaningful to the individual and society. A life is a life of striving, pushing yourself to your limits, and finding success.
Utilitarianism	Outcomes justify the means or ways to achieve it. Holds that the most ethical choice is the one that will produce the greatest good for the greatest number.
Ethics of duty	Some acts are right or wrong because of the sorts of things they are, and people have a duty to act accordingly, regardless of the good or bad consequences that may be produced. Examples - the duty to tell the truth, obey the law, protect people from harm, keep one's promises.

MY LIFE WHEEL



How to find meaning in life?

Meaningful work is a fundamental component of well-being that contributes to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Meaningful work is the subjective experience that one's work has significance, facilitates personal growth, and contributes to the greater good.

Scholars consider meaningful work to be a key outcome of *self-determination*, which itself is derived from having decent work.

Professional Self- Determination

The independent choice of profession, carried out the analysis of a persons' internal resources, including their abilities and their correlation with the requirements of the profession.

Career development: Certain concepts

Career development

- Development of work-related competencies and values and work experiences and transitions in jobs and across a career in one or more job across the life span.

Development task

- Tasks and roles across all domains of human functioning which are expected a person can execute at certain stages of life.

Critical periods

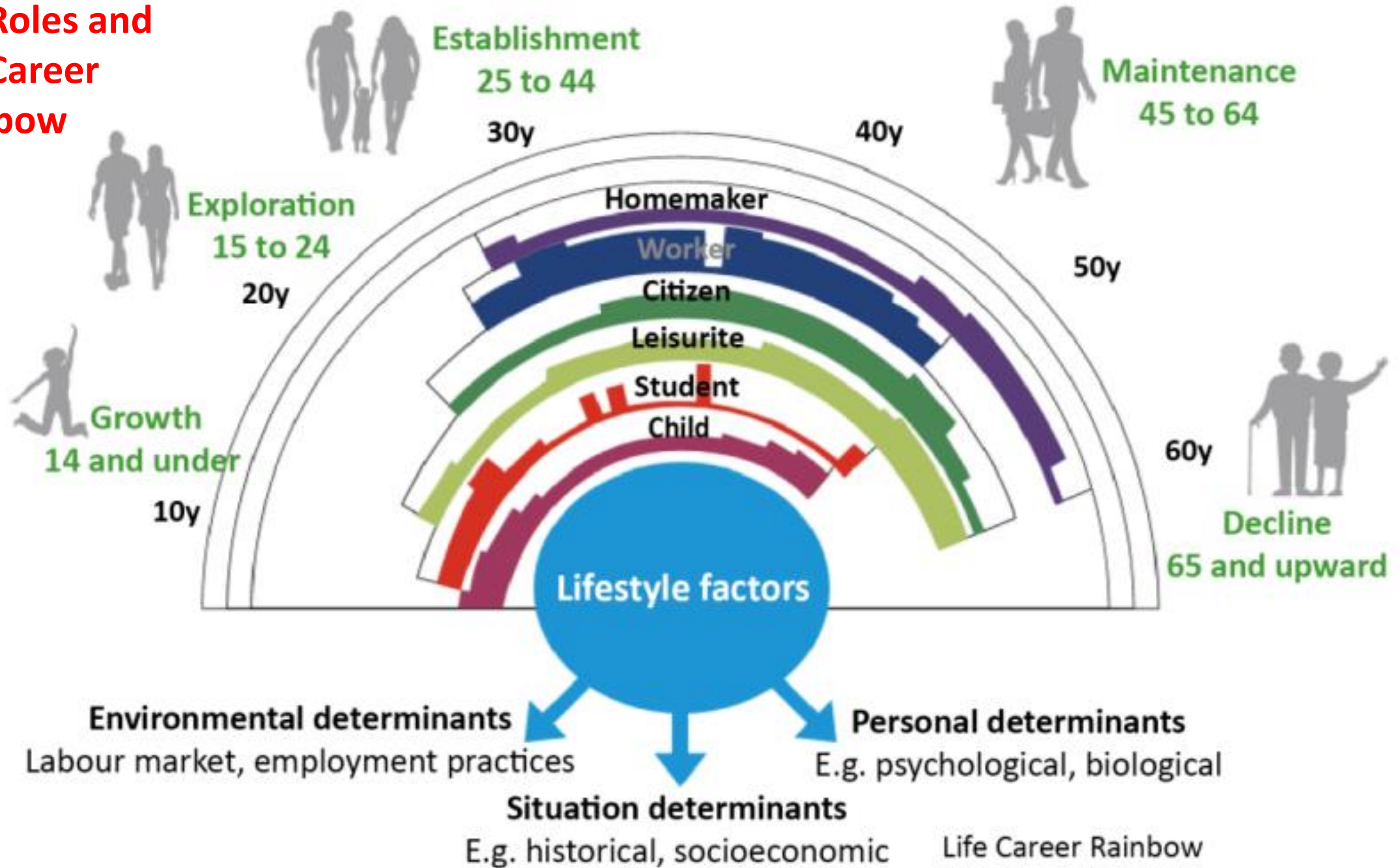
- Refers to certain point in time when particular factors will or have positive or negative influence
- Sensitive to particular type of stimulation
- Limited duration and lasting effect
- Effect noticeable in adulthood
- May be neutralised by subsequent positive experiences

The American psychologist Donald E. Super developed the theory that describes career development in terms of life stages and life roles.

Super's Five Life and Career Development Stages

STAGES	AGE	CHARACTERISTICS
Growth	Birth to 14 or 15	Form self-concept, develop capacity, attitudes, interests, and needs, and form a general understanding of the world of work.
Exploratory	15 – 24	“Try out” through classes, work experience, hobbies. Collect relevant information. Tentative choice and related skill development.
Establishment	25 – 44	Entry skill building and stabilization through work experience.
Maintenance	45 – 64	Continual adjustment process to improve position.
Disengagement	65+	Reduced output, prepare for retirement.

Life Roles and Life Career Rainbow



Life Career Rainbow
(Adapted from Super, 1980, P.289)

Gender-related career development issues

- *Work and non-work roles* have spill-over effects on work, careers and personal life
- **Non-work roles** (marriage, parenting, family roles, religion, leisure and societal responsibilities)
- Increase of *women* in the labour market
 - Career self-efficacy of women—do they believe in their abilities?
 - Change in traditional male and female roles
 - Dual earner and career couples
 - Influence on family life—psychological stress

Cross-cultural-related career development issues

- Different cultural perceptions on work and career development
- Example: Collective vs. individual orientations
- Differences – effective diversity management to promote career development
- Migrant workers
- Minority group issues

Lifelong learning and employability

- Successful career development and success across the life span requires *life -long learning*
- Continuously obtain and update competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills and abilities)
- *Employability* - a person has the value, potential and competitive edge which future employees may want

PROFESSION is any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education

SPECIALIZATION - the process of concentrating on and becoming expert in a particular subject or skill.

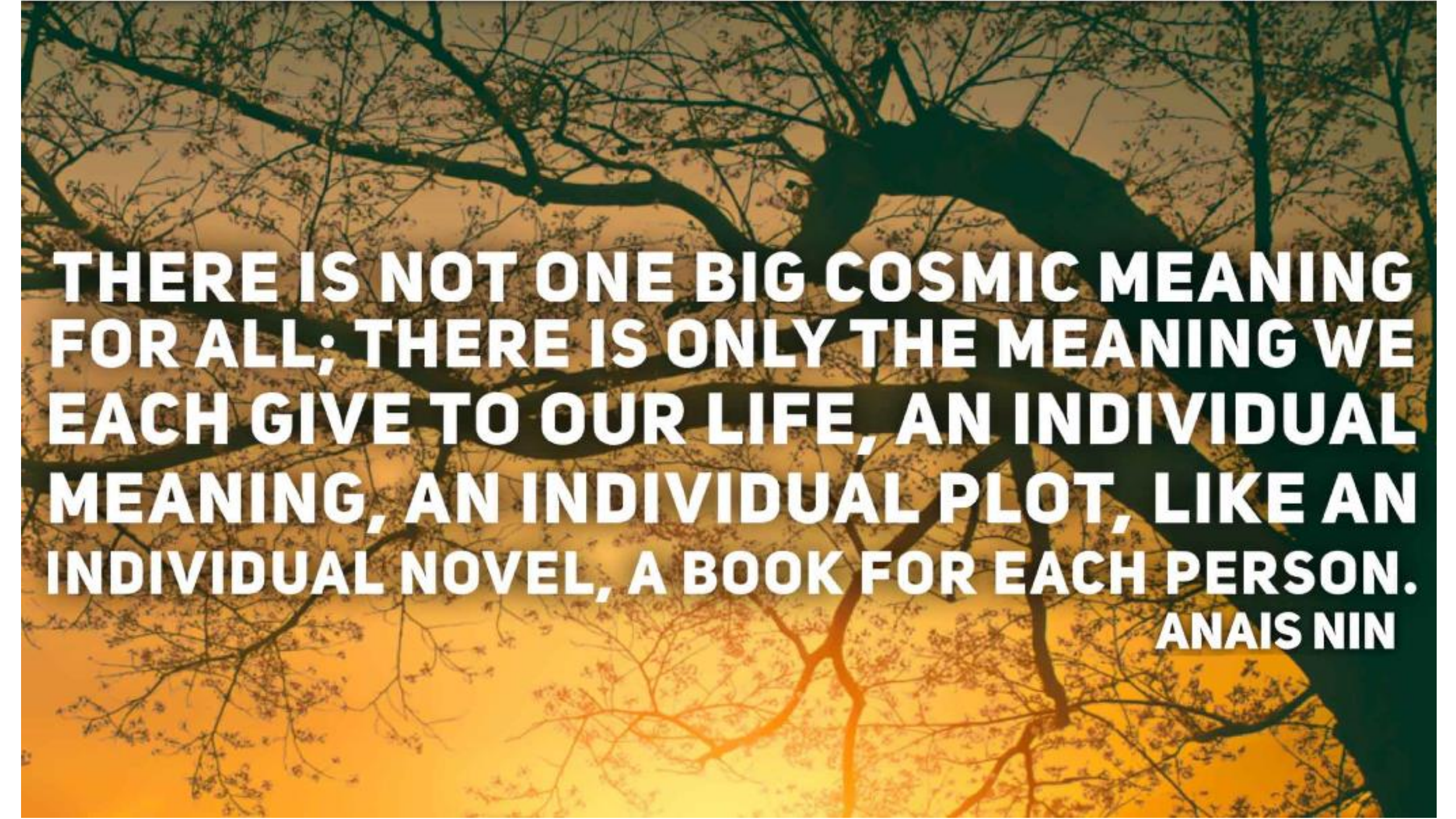
QUALIFICATION: a special skill or type of experience or knowledge that makes someone suitable to do a particular job or activity

What Your Dream Job Consists of?

Before you explore these further, there are a few key areas you need to keep in mind:

- Career goals
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Personal characteristics
- Experience





**THERE IS NOT ONE BIG COSMIC MEANING
FOR ALL; THERE IS ONLY THE MEANING WE
EACH GIVE TO OUR LIFE, AN INDIVIDUAL
MEANING, AN INDIVIDUAL PLOT, LIKE AN
INDIVIDUAL NOVEL, A BOOK FOR EACH PERSON.**

ANAIS NIN

**I FEEL THE CAPACITY
TO CARE IS THE THING
WHICH GIVES LIFE ITS
DEEPEST SIGNIFICANCE.**

PABLO CASALS





THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE IS TO PLANT TREES,

UNDER WHOSE SHADE YOU DO NOT EXPECT TO SIT.

NELSON HENDERSON

EVERY MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE IS INFINITELY
CREATIVE AND THE UNIVERSE IS
ENDLESSLY BOUNTIFUL. JUST PUT FORTH A
CLEAR ENOUGH REQUEST, AND EVERYTHING
YOUR HEART DESIRES MUST COME TO YOU.

MAHATMA GANDHI



The meaning of life is to find a purpose to live for. – **Aleksandr Sebryakov**

The meaning of life is to give life meaning. – **Ken Hudgins**

The meaning of life is to live a meaningful life. – **Bill Phillips**

The meaning of life is to matter, to have it count that we ever lived at all, to have the world be a better place when they put us in the ground than when they pulled us from our mothers. – **Peter F. DiSilvio**

The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them. – **Antoine de Saint Exupery**