

## Program Calendar



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Program Director

# Finding Meaning, Seeking Purpose

*"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."*

— Viktor E. Frankl

Viktor Frankl's book, *A Man's Search for Meaning*, was a life-

altering read for me. Frankl was a holocaust survivor and psychiatrist. He asked questions like: "What is the purpose of life?" and "Why am I here?" He contemplated these questions while in a concentration camp and in the midst of extreme suffering ... he found meaning. Frankl reminds us that when we are thrust into unimaginable situations, such as a life-threatening illness, a natural disaster or the death of a loved one, life's questions become elevated in importance.

Inspired by Frankl, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on existential art therapy and how people use the creative process to connect to purpose and meaning. In my life and over the course of my career, I have witnessed firsthand how finding purpose and making meaning is a fundamental part of the human condition. It is what we strive to do. It determines why we do what we do. It helps define who we are.

**If cancer has affected your life, you may be wondering what brings you meaning or where your sense of purpose comes from. Frankl said, "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose."**

No matter where you are in your life's circumstance or prognosis, ability or disability, you can make meaning and connect to purpose. Meaning is found in both the profound and the mundane and experienced in witnessing both the first breath of life and moments leading up to the last. Frankl believed that in every living moment, even in suffering, life never ceases to have meaning. We just have to tap into it.

**Here are ideas to help you tap into meaning and purpose:**

- 1. Volunteer.** Give time and energy to an organization you value. **Volunteering** brings you perspective, deepens empathy and cultivates gratitude for what you have.
- 2. Pick one thing on your dream or bucket list and do it.** Don't have one? Start by brainstorming all the things you have ever wanted to do, then pick one ... and do it.
- 3. Get creative.** Take an **expressive art, movement, music or improv class**, or simply enjoy **being inspired** by someone else's creativity.
- 4. Leave a legacy.** **Donate** to an organization you believe in. Create a work of art, write a song, poem or story for someone

you love. Be a mentor to others. Share your knowledge, experience and resources.

**5. Nourish your mind and body.** Find ways to pause. Take three deep breathes in through your nose and out through your mouth while being aware of how your lungs and belly fill with air. Take a yoga, **mindfulness** or Qigong class. Life is busy. Slow down and reconnect to your body, mind and spirit.

**6. Make amends and deepen relationships.** None of us is perfect. Become aware of and acknowledge harms you may have caused, find self-compassion for mistakes you have made and then muster the courage to say "I am sorry" and ask for forgiveness.

**7. Get social.** We aren't meant to live in isolation. When times are tough, being social isn't always easy. Attend a **dinner or inspirational talk**. Make **cookies** or **ornaments** with others. Go out with friends to a **comedy club** or for **breakfast**.

**8. Provide care to someone else.** Caregiving is one of the toughest jobs in the world. In caring for someone else, you see the good, the bad and the ugly. You also see the beauty, humility and vulnerability of the human spirit. Don't forget that your caregiving should always include self-care.

**9. Ritualize your self-care.** Carve out regular time to invest in your health and wellness. Take a healthy foods or exercise class, or a workshop on how to **look good and feel better**. Regularly make time to take time ... just for you!

**10. Honor the losses and hardships in life.** When there is hurt, lean into it. It is in the hurt that we start the healing. It is in the healing, we begin to unfold meaning. We must move through to move beyond. Create a ritual to **celebrate life**. Attend a memorial. Seek out conversations on **grief and loss**.

**11. Spend intentional time with someone you love.** Snuggle a little extra with your kids or grandkids at bedtime, invite your honey out on date night even if it's just a candlelight dinner at the kitchen table, or call a friend and start the conversation with, "I've always wanted to tell you..."



**12. Become part of a community.** Connect with other people who "get you" and welcome you just as you are. Find a support group, a spiritual community, a book club or **knitting group**. Do something you enjoy, with people who resonate with you.

Sometimes we have to reframe our perception of difficult, life-altering situations. As Frankl said, "Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the

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situation." When we create meaning, we connect with purpose.

**I hope you know that many of the ideas above are things you can tap into at Gilda's Club.**

I look forward to seeing you at the clubhouse.

Contact Ali at 952-767-7627 or [Ali@GildasClubTwinCities.org](mailto:Ali@GildasClubTwinCities.org).

**See what's on the Program Calendar**



### NEW TO THE CALENDAR

#### **Evening of Remembrance: Celebrating Life, Honoring Loss**

**Thursday, Nov 2 from 5:30-7:00pm**

Join others for an evening of celebrating life and honoring loss. As a community, we will meaningfully acknowledge our loved ones through a candle lighting ceremony, poem reading, luminary decorating, sharing stories, pictures and mementos.



#### **A Night at Brave New Workshop: The Polarizing Express**

**Tuesday, Nov 7 from 6:00-9:30pm at Brave New Workshop in Downtown Minneapolis**

Spend a fabulously-funny night downtown! The Brave New Workshop's holiday show is a cherished annual event for those most likely to wind up on the 'naughty' list. Tickets are FREE for GCTC members and a guest. Spots are limited so RSVP ASAP to reserve your spot!

#### **Parenting Through Cancer**

**Wednesday, Nov 8 from 5:30-7:00pm**

Offered in partnership with Angel Foundation, this session is designed to provide families the information and support needed to face the challenges of cancer as a family. While parents meet, children and teens (ages 5-18) join their peers in age-specific groups. All participants learn how to talk about cancer and the impact on their families.

#### **Winter Ornaments**

**Tuesday, Dec 5 from 1:00-2:30pm & Thursday, Dec 14 from 6:30-8:00pm**

Add a personal touch to your home by making two handmade ornaments that will give your home a warm, joyful look during the holidays.

#### **Living with Purpose in Daily Life and Holiday Dinner**

**Tuesday, Dec 5 from 5:00-6:00pm with dinner from 6-7pm**

The quest towards living with purpose in daily life is a universal human experience. However, it can feel like a struggle or out of

reach. Join a conversation that explores the importance of this inquiry to one's health and well-being. And then stay for a special Holiday Dinner that brings together the whole GCTC community.

#### **Cookie Baking**

**Wednesday, Dec 6 from 5:30-7:00pm**

Eating healthy doesn't mean you have to skip baked goods around the holidays. Join us to learn healthy and delicious recipes, because nothing says the holidays liked fresh cookies!



#### **Extra Support for the Holidays**

**Tuesday, Dec 26 from 10:30am-12pm**

Open to all adult members who are living with cancer, family & friends of a person with cancer or grieving due to a loss needing a little extra support while the clubhouse is closed for the holidays from December 25-January 1.

#### **NEW Young Adult Gatherings**

**Friendsgiving | Friday, Nov 10 from 6:00-8:00pm**

A fall night of food, friends and fun! We will set the table with yummy food and drink while finding gratitude for all we have.

#### **Cookie Making & Decorating | Friday, Dec 8 from 6:00-8:00pm**

Tis the season for sweet treats. Come to the Gilda's Club kitchen to make yummy cookies with friends. There will be holiday music, hot cocoa and cider. Not a baker? No worries! Join in for the fun and festivity. We will bake enough warm eats and treats to bring home to share with family and friends.

#### **NEW Art Therapy Offerings**

##### **Collage**

**Thursdays, Nov 2-30 from 6:30-8:00pm**

Collage technique is an easy and fun way to express yourself, and arranging and gluing found objects and fragments can be one way to make coherent sense of the world around you.

##### **Transformational Painting**

**Wednesdays, Nov 8 & 22, Dec 6 & 20 from 6:30-8:00pm**

As experiences can be difficult to describe in words, we can use creativity and art to express our experiences. This class will incorporate mindfulness and create connections between our bodies and all things around us.

##### **Altered Books**

**Tuesdays, Nov 14 & 28 and Dec 12 from 6:30-8:00pm**

Using a variety of materials, explore and create a book that can capture the day-to-day activities, and emotions that are intertwined into our journeys.

#### **SUPPORT**

– **Support Groups** | See calendar for dates and times.

To participate in support groups, you must complete a Customized Membership Plan with a member of the program staff. Call 612-227-2147 to learn more.

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