Introduction (5 mins): Start this month’s Get-Together on MEANING by asking everyone to share their name and one action they’ve taken recently to bring happiness to themselves or others.

TUNE IN to our experience with mindfulness and gratitude

Mindfulness Exercise (5 mins): Feeling part of something bigger than yourself
Take a moment to silently reflect on a time when you felt really connected to something outside yourself. Perhaps when acting generously for someone else, or by being out in natural landscape. Notice the feelings and sensations that pass through your body when you remember this.

Gratitude Exercise (10 mins): Someone or something that is meaningful for you
Turn to someone next to you and share a bit about a person, object or experience that really means something to you and that you feel grateful for in your life. This might be a friend or loved one, a beloved possession or a memory of a particular time or activity.

CONNECT with others to help us deepen our understanding

Group Discussion (30 mins): The quest for meaning
Ask a volunteer to read out the text below and suggested questions for discussion in small groups. Remember, this is an opportunity to listen and learn from people’s real life experiences, so allow each other space and try to share real feelings rather than getting caught up in thoughts or ideas.

What really matters? Why am I here? What’s my purpose? How should I live my life? These are BIG questions and having our own answers is a key ingredient for well-being.

We’re a species that needs to find meaning, perhaps the only one that does. It helps us to feel that who we are and what we do matter … The path to meaning isn’t always straight or easy and can take time. It may change as we develop our understanding of ourselves and the world. It can come through deep reflection and through trying things out. And it usually involves knowing how we’re connected and how we contribute to something bigger and beyond ourselves.

Find out more in 10 Keys to Happier Living (Chapter 10): www.actionforhappiness.org/book

Questions for discussion:
• Which activities in your life give you a sense of meaning and purpose?
• How do our actions make a difference in the world around us, however small?
Action Setting (10 mins): Getting active

Think of one small practical thing you can do to carry a bit of what you’ve explored today into your life. You might like to try one of the suggested actions below. By going around the group and each sharing our action we make ourselves more likely to complete it and inspire each other also!

1) Make a collage of photographs from times that have been meaningful to you; or once a day take a photo of something that really matters to you.
2) Get involved with a cause you feel is important, for example by donating to a charity you care about or joining with a local volunteering scheme.

RESOURCES

- Calendar: Meaningful May. Simple daily actions you can take: www.actionforhappiness.org/meaningful-may
- Video: What if money was no object? Alan Watts challenges us to think deeply about how we choose to live our lives www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSyHWMdH9gk
- Book: Man’s Search for Meaning by Victor Frankl. Powerful and insightful book about finding meaning in the harshest of circumstances

RESEARCH

- People who have meaning are happier, feel more in control and experience less stress, anxiety and depression
- People with a ‘calling’ are less likely to have conflict between work and non-work parts of their lives

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does"

~ William James