

## **Towards A Meaningful Experience: A Theme-Model to Assist Change**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Although the majority South Africans' perception on their life experiences in general remains fairly low, a qualitative study conducted amongst 19 South Africans provides a model on how certain individuals were able to have meaningful experiences in spite of their significant negative situations. These individuals were able to create change in their own low/negative (called 'poor/rags') life experiences and move beyond that towards high/positive (called 'rich') and meaningful life experiences. The study explored the psychological and spiritual factors present in their lives and aimed to determine what caused such change. A phenomenological approach, from a positive psychological theoretical viewpoint, was followed. In telling their stories on how they were able to move beyond a significant low point to a significant high point, themes to explain the change were identified through thematic analysis. The study concluded that a combination of aspects (presented in a theme-model) are involved and could be useful in affecting positive change towards meaning in one's own life. The value of the study is to present a model for changing negative life experiences into positive life experiences.

**Keywords:** mindfulness; rags to riches; resilience; spiritual psychology; spiritual virtues