

What motivates us to strive towards particular milestones? Finding a love partner, rising through the ranks at work, or receiving a raise? We do it because we believe it will make us happy. In truth, they might – but not in a significant way.

Why do we have such a strong desire to avoid some painful events? Divorce, being fired, or suffering a significant wage cut? We feel these things will make us miserable, therefore we avoid them. But there's more to the tale than that.

It appears that many of us are pursuing joy in the wrong way. However, by implementing tiny changes to our daily routines, we may achieve long-term satisfaction. You'll find out how in these chapters.

In these chapters, you'll learn

- What does hedonic adaptation mean;
- Why your divorce may make you happier than you've ever been; and
- How your job goals can be at odds with your happiness.

Chapter 1 - There is no such thing as a happy recipe.

When are you going to be happy? Will you be content when you find and marry your ideal partner? When you eventually get to the corner office, what will you do?

We've been socialized to associate happiness with achieving socially mandated milestones like these. It's true that reaching these milestones may provide a rush and perhaps have a beneficial impact on our lives. However, they seldom result in long-term happiness.

We have a propensity to overestimate the level of happiness that a favorable event would bring into our life, according to a collaborative experiment performed by Harvard University and the University of Virginia. On the other hand, we have a proclivity to exaggerate the negative influence of a catastrophe - such as illness or financial hardship – on our lives' path.

To put it another way, we plan our lives around significant events, both happy and unpleasant. We aim for good milestones, knowing that they would offer us genuine joy. So we do everything we can to avoid bad milestones, fearing that they will ruin our lives.

However, when our positive achievements fall short of our expectations, they can soon become anticlimactic. Yet, in order to prevent life's bad occurrences, we avoid taking chances and making changes.

In reality, these occurrences are rarely as catastrophic as we think. Recent research suggests that persons who have faced some form of trauma or hardship in their life are generally happier than those who have not.

There are two possible reasons. The first is that overcoming adversity once gives us the tools to do so again. The second argument is that deeply bad experiences, like losing a job, can stimulate positive life changes, such as finally pursuing a dream job.

While we can strive for pleasant outcomes or avoid undesirable outcomes, neither strategy leads to a real pleasure. Rather, we must reject the destructive idea that pleasure or dissatisfaction is determined by attaining or failing to attain superficial goals.

Chapter 2 - The joy of love and happiness adapts swiftly to us.

Isn't it true that your wedding day is intended to be the best day of your life? Given the amount of stress and social pressure that weddings entail, that seems a little insane!

What's even crazier? The anticipation that your marriage will provide you with a high level of happiness for the rest of your life. It's not going to happen.

In reality, according to 2005 research, the average newlywed experiences an increase in happiness throughout the first two years of their marriage. Then what? Their levels of contentment return to normal.

Hedonistic adjustment is seen by this relatively brief increase in newlyweds' happiness. Humanity's ability to adapt to a good shift in conditions is described by this psychological concept. In a basic sense, when we obtain what we want, we feel a rush of excitement. Our better conditions, on the other hand, become our new normal in no time.

Hedonic adaptation is a notion that applies to many aspects of life. When it comes to love relationships, though, things are a little more difficult. We usually feel passionate love when we first fall in love with someone. This is an exciting, all-consuming, and sexually charged type of love.

We lose all interest in everyone except our new companion while we are in deep love. We have trouble concentrating on daily chores since we are always thinking about our spouses. In this early period, we're also afraid of rejection.

Deep love has a short lifespan, ranging from a few months to many years. This is a good thing! Consider how your career, other relationships, and mental health would suffer if you spent all day thinking just about your love partner!

Passionate love, which is based on trust and respect for our partner, follows sweet love.

We've been conditioned by evolution to feel intense affection for others. And besides, it ensures our species' biological survival. We are, however, in evolutionary terms conditioned to seek out companionship. That's the kind of practical love that helps us deal with problems like child-raising, illness, and financial difficulties.

Therefore, if the pleasure of your relationship has worn off, hold off on downloading Tinder just yet. Enjoy the knowledge that you've entered a new, healthy phase of the connection. And what if you still want to maintain the flame? Moreover, there are a few pointers in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 - It doesn't have to be a fresh relationship to be exciting.

Let us just assume you and your partner have been dating for a few years. Restaurant food and watching box sets on the couch have replaced dinner dates at trendy eateries. You used to think to yourself, "I can't wait to pull their clothes off!" when you looked at your spouse. You could now say to yourself, "I should remind them to pay the gas bill."

All of this is very normal. Hedonic adaptation and intense love metamorphosing into companionate love are the causes. Does this imply that you should settle down and accept a fulfilling but uninspiring life? Certainly not!

When hedonic adaptation occurs in a relationship, it does not always imply that the connection is no longer beneficial. We've just become oblivious to its benefits. However, there are three easy methods that may help you see all of the wonderful aspects of your relationship in a new light.

What's first? Develop a sense of gratitude for your relationship. Gratitude was probably something that came easy to you in the early days of your relationship. However, when you become accustomed to their positive characteristics, you run the risk of taking your spouse for granted. So, avoid the desire to adjust and concentrate on the qualities you admire in your spouse. You could just write them down, or you could write them a letter explaining all the ways they improve your life.

Secondly, keep things unexpected. Hedonic adaptation is not a foregone conclusion. In dynamic settings, humans are significantly less likely to display hedonic adaptation, according to psychologists. Defy the norm and come up with easy methods to surprise your sweetheart. As a partnership and as individuals, be more daring. If you're caught in a rut, you can't expect your relationship to surprise you.

Lastly, do some exercise outside of the bedroom. Physical contact, both sexual and non-sexual, is an important element of most love relationships. Even basic touch, such as stroking your partner's arm, can trigger the reward system in your brain, reducing tension and anxiety. Furthermore, touch plays a crucial role in nonverbal communication. This can convey feelings of love, gratitude, or sympathy. It has the ability to de-escalate tension and build closeness when used appropriately.

Therefore, if you're experiencing being physically distant from your spouse, try putting your hands on them more. When they depart for work, stroke their foreheads, hold their hands, and kiss them. These little, thoughtful actions may reignite your love for one another.

Keep in mind that in a secure, long-term relationship, happiness and passion are still present. You might simply have to put forth a bit more effort to locate them.

Chapter 4 - Divorce is difficult, but it's usually not as difficult as you think.

The idea that marriage brings happiness is a fallacy. This idea also has a mythological flip side: that happiness is unattainable after divorce or the end of a long-term relationship. This notion has been so ingrained in our minds that many individuals continue to stay in unhappy relationships. They believe they are protecting themselves from the pain of a divorce.

Sure, it would be deceptive to claim that divorce does not result in sadness. However, your dissatisfaction is unlikely to be as severe or long-lasting as you think.

Detaching your life from your partner's can be difficult because of emotions, legal wrangling, and practical issues such as financial and custody division. Despite all of these short-term difficulties, there is reason to be optimistic. Numerous studies suggest that divorcées' satisfaction levels increase significantly over time.

How can anyone be joyful after such a horrific, life-altering experience?

It's simple: people have an extraordinary ability to withstand adversity. We have an almost magical ability to cope with stress, see the good in the bad, and recover from setbacks. However, for many of us, this potential is unrealized. We avoid painful situations like divorce because of this. We feel they will permanently break us. They aren't going to.

Recognize the concept of hedonic adaptation, or our ability to adjust to new and better circumstances? It also works the other way around. Participants in a 1991 research indicated higher psychological suffering two years following a divorce. Then what? They were able to bounce back. In fact, they achieved a higher degree of happiness than they had previously recorded in their marriage.

When we think about divorce, the first thing that comes to mind is sorrow. But there's a lot more to life than that. We don't notice the small pleasures in life, such as a good cup of coffee in the morning or a breathtaking sunset, that may brighten even the darkest of days. Even during a divorce, we don't see the work responsibilities, social duties, hobbies, errands, and other activities that occupy our days.

In reality, half of those considering divorce were asked to identify all of the obligations and activities that would occupy their days post-divorce in a 2000 research. The other half, on the other hand, was not. After then, the participants were asked to imagine how awful a divorce might be. Those who had envisioned their lives in greater depth had a more moderate assessment of the agony of divorce, which was unsurprising.

Divorce will not keep you miserable indefinitely. A poisonous marriage, on the other hand, may.

Chapter 5 - There is no such thing as flawless work.

On weekdays, you despise the sound of your alarm clock. You're counting down the minutes till you can go by the time you get to your desk at 9:00 a.m. You're uninterested in meetings, your coworkers irritate you, and you go through the motions like a robot.

This wasn't always the case. Your first several years in this position were both rewarding and hard. However, such is not the case these days.

It's possible that you need to switch careers. Perhaps you need to acknowledge to yourself that you've bought into yet another popular happiness myth: because you'll be happy once you get a better job.

A new job might not provide you greater happiness than your old one unless you're stuck in a hostile environment or longing for a career move. A 2005 study followed the happiness levels of managers who were promoted or moved to a different city over a five-year period. Their levels of happiness quickly reverted to baseline after a dramatic increase in the first year. The managers rapidly grew used to the advantages of their new roles thanks to hedonic adaptation. So pursuing better and better jobs in the pursuit of happiness might not be the best idea.

Perhaps the root of your discontent with your employment isn't yours, but someone else's? It's never been simpler to compare ourselves to others in the world of social media. We frequently question ourselves, "Is my work as attractive, important, or well-paid as my neighbor's?" instead of "Does my job offer me satisfaction?"

We are socialized to compare ourselves to others from an early age. We won't be able to totally break the habit. It's worth revisiting that self-evaluation the next time you're feeling insecure. Are you dissatisfied with yourself because you didn't reach your own internal standards, or are you just comparing yourself to others' accomplishments?

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Do you want to be more satisfied at work? To avoid hedonic adaptation, cultivate an appreciation for the aspects of your job that you love. Also, don't judge your work happiness only on the basis of superficial comparisons to other people's jobs.

Chapter 6 - Happiness may be bought with money, but only to a certain extent.

Remember the old adage about money not being able to buy happiness? Now, psychological research after psychological study has shown that this is untrue. And besides, money can bring comfort and security, as well as basic necessities, joys, and indulgences. Generally speaking, the more money someone has, the happier they are likely to be.

However, the ancient adage may have some truth though.

When those who don't have sufficient money gain more, they feel a significant increase in happiness. However, happiness has a finite lifespan. When someone has a lot of money, getting more will make them happy - but only for a short time. The richer a person is, the faster he or she adjusts to earning more money.

As a result, financial comfort may play a role in happiness. But that isn't the be-all and end-all that we often believe it to be. And being frugal may really improve your happiness.

Let's take the purchase of a home as an example. Making a purchase may elicit a lot of good feelings. It just doesn't get much bigger than a luxury home with a large yard. However, the joy of the acquisition is quickly forgotten. Soon, you'll be accustomed to the pleasures of living in a luxurious home.

Perceived benefits adapt fast, but bad ones take longer to recover from. So paying off the expensive mortgage connected to that luxury property is a bad experience that will almost certainly create worry and anxiety at monthly intervals - even after the joy of the house has faded.

However, there is a way out. Let's assume you sell your large home and buy a smaller one. Even if you don't receive the short-term thrill of making an expensive purchase, you'll experience less daily dissatisfaction and tension. Furthermore, you've decreased your overall unpleasant experience. According to 1997 research, minimizing a bad experience can result in three to five times the enjoyment as merely generating a pleasant experience. For example, paying off your credit card will make you at least three times as pleased as charging a new television to it.

Certainly, money has an essential role in happiness. You can't, however, totally purchase your way to happiness.

Chapter 7 - A challenging diagnosis might change your life, but happiness is still achievable.

Events occur in everyone's life that comes out of nowhere to interrupt our pleasure and comfort. Such a life-changing event can shake us to our core. Such an occurrence is receiving a diagnosis of a serious or fatal disease.

If you or a beloved one is struggling with a bad diagnosis, you may believe you no longer have the ability to be happy. However, you do. So, more now than ever, it's critical that you take advantage of it.

When we get unfortunate news, it's easy to become caught up in it and forget about everything else. Note, however, the words of philosopher William James. "My experience is what I agree to attend to," he added. In another sense, the things we choose to focus on determine our reality. Indeed, a single unpleasant occurrence can make us feel as though the reality is slipping away from us. However, if we redirect our attention, we can regain some control.

Even in the midst of a critical illness, what we pay attention to and what we miss may form our reality. Instead of focusing on the pains of illness, we might attempt to concentrate on the joy of seeing the garden flourish. Rather than feeling disheartened because we can't handle our morning jog, we can attempt to appreciate the fact that we can still climb the stairs. We create a more pleasant world when we choose to focus on the good.

That isn't to say that the mental work isn't difficult. It necessitates a great deal of determination and work. Learn to meditate to improve your focus. The focus of this practice is on your breath, your thoughts, or a mix of the two. Meditation significantly enhances our ability to direct and sustain our concentration, according to 2007 research.

So what is the point of attempting to be cheerful in the face of bad news, you might wonder? The Matthew effect, according to psychologists, is a phenomenon. "For to those who have, more will be given, and it will be given in abundance," Matthew states in the Bible. And psychologists have discovered that this is true in an emotional setting. When you have a pleasant emotional experience, you are more likely to have additional positive emotional experiences. An upward spiral develops as a result of this.

Although you are going through a difficult moment, whatever happiness you can create for yourself will work like a magnet, attracting more happiness into your life.

Chapter 8 - Regrets and happiness are compatible.

Some dreams fade away, such as a youthful desire to be an astronaut or a princess.

Then there are the aspirations you're forced to abandon: the desire of becoming a partner at your company, the hope of pursuing your passion for painting professionally, the dream of getting married or having a kid.

Unaccomplished dreams of this nature frequently turn into regret. And regrets, according to legend, prevent us from being genuinely happy.

They don't have to, though.

In reality, confronting our regrets is an essential component of living a happy life. Dealing with our "lost possible selves," as psychologists call them, is good. Consider two collegiate athletes, Lucy and Alejandro, who both aspire to be Olympic stars. These aren't just idle fantasies, though. The athletes are extremely gifted, and they have the opportunity to try out for the Olympic squad. However, they both just miss out, and they are both unhappy. The two sportsmen continue to chase their ambition throughout the following decade.

Age and injury eventually compel them to retire.

Lucy takes some time to recover from the shock. After that, she resets her life. She works a nine-to-five job during the week and instructs sports on weekends. She continues to play in a local league. She takes pride in her sporting accomplishments. She seemed to be content.

Alejandro, on the other hand, despises being reminded of his athletic history. He's thrown away all of his former trophies and no longer engages in sports. He is dissatisfied.

Lucy confronted her regrets and lamented the loss of her potential Olympian self. She asked herself what she might learn from her remorse as she examined it. What was her takeaway? She is a huge sports fan. As a result, she structured her life to supporting her desire.

Alejandro averted his gaze from his remorse. He didn't want to think about it since he thought it would make him miserable. However, his reluctance to accept his past mistakes has tainted his present. It cut him off from something that had previously brought him delight.

Regrets can serve as instructors. They can show what sorts of lives we wish to live and what matters to us. They can also reveal to us where we've made blunders in life, which is much more unpleasant. However, acknowledging our errors prevents us from repeating them.

There are regrets in everyone's life. Have an open and honest conversation with yourself if you want to live a happy life.

The Myths of Happiness by Sonja Lyubomirsky Book Review

There is no such thing as a happy formula. However, the first step toward living a truly happy life is to let go of a few misconceptions, such as believing that achieving socially acceptable milestones would make you happy or that experiencing certain circumstances will result in

everlasting misery. Allowing yourself to be free of expectations will allow you to experience real happiness in your life.

Distribute the riches.

More money does not offer satisfaction to people who are already affluent, according to studies. But is there anything that can make rich people happy? They've decided to share their good fortune with others. Spending money pro-socially, or for a worthy cause that does not benefit us individually, improves happiness levels more than spending money on oneself, according to 2008 research.

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