



Opinion

Finding purpose in life and shaking up one's routine might help to navigate the ups and down

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Abstract

Most individuals want to feel like they're living for something bigger than themselves. In or out of our consciousness. While the idea is appealing, the reality may be more difficult to achieve. The assumptions about life's meaning may stem from a lack of introspection into one's own purpose. These hardwired beliefs about the world often originate in our families and the places we call home. Having an effect on the world, no matter how big or little, is what gives people a feeling of purpose in life, rather than a predetermined destination. One's purpose is the driving force behind their behavior. Continually and throughout the years. Purpose provides stability and direction even in the face of failures and a seemingly chaotic environment. The subject of life's purpose may seem abstract, but it's worth pondering. If people want to be happy and successful in every aspect of life, finding purpose is the key.

The inability to find happiness may be an indication of an issue with one's mental health, or it may just be a natural reaction

The roller coaster that is life is often characterised by a series of difficult experiences occurring all at once. It is natural for us to experience a lack of joy whenever the world around us is turned on its head. The list of severe stressors and traumatic events is very long and includes things like health problems, losses, breakups, housing difficulties, and natural disasters. Throughout their lives, the vast majority of adults will be subjected to multiple severe traumas and losses. In situations like these, the natural progression of the human experience is toward a lessening of joy [1].

On the other hand, the absence of joy can linger for some people or appear seemingly out of nowhere. Mood disorders like depression might manifest themselves in this way. The inability to experience pleasure, also referred to as anhedonia, is a fairly common symptom of depression, and it is even one of the diagnostic criteria for the condition [2]. About eight percent of adults in the United States will have a depressive episode in

any given year, and about twenty percent of people will have at least one major depressive episode in their lifetime. Other mental conditions, such as psychotic disorders and dementia, are often accompanied by an inability to find pleasure in life. Certain drugs, including (ironically) those used to treat depression, have been shown to produce emotional blunting and a loss of pleasure in some patients [3].

How are pleasure and happiness distinct from one another?

There is a lot of overlap between the concepts of joy and happiness. Joy, on the other hand, is a state of mind that may be found even in times of loss or uncertainty, while happiness technically refers to the pleasant sensations (emotions) that emerge from a situation, experience, or thing. Therefore, we may strive toward growing pleasure regardless of the situations we find ourselves in. The euphoria one experiences may be fleeting upon winning the lotto, but it may be more long-lasting if one spends time participating in things that are important to them [4,5].



Happiness and the release of feel-good neurotransmitters

Dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins are some of the neurotransmitters that stand out when it comes to encouraging pleasant sensations. Although the neurobiology of pleasure is complicated, there are a few neurotransmitters that stand out in generating positive feelings. The encouraging news is that several adjustments to our daily routines have the potential to raise the levels of these neurotransmitters. For instance, exercising may result in a “runner’s high,” while spending time with a newborn causes the production of oxytocin, sometimes known as the “cuddle hormone,” which creates a sense of connection.

The effects that neurotransmitters have on the body are many, ranging from making muscles more relaxed to increasing the pace at which the heart beats. However, it is possible that these effects will ultimately lead to a similar destination: the promotion of happy sensations. The advantages for both the mind and the body are quite extensive, and they might come in the form of discovering a sense of purpose or experiencing supportive relationships [6,7].

How can one make themselves happier?

- Whenever one is going through challenging circumstances, it is more crucial than ever to shake up the routine and give oneself permission to feel happy. The following are some suggestions; however, it may take some time and effort on their part to determine which ones are most beneficial to them:
- Engage in aerobic physical exercise on a consistent basis. Imagine that engaging in physical activity is like turning on a shower full of neurotransmitters; the impact of these chemicals may be felt for hours after the action has stopped.
- Put the needs of others above one’s own. Volunteering and other altruistic pursuits bring more happiness than concentrating just on one’s own life.
- Get in touch with the spiritual aspect of oneself. We cultivate sentiments of appreciation, compassion, and calm inside ourselves when we participate in something that is greater than ourselves. The neural circuits associated with pleasure may be powerfully altered via the practice of meditation.
- Learn something completely new. We, humans, are hardwired to feel delighted when exposed to new things because of our evolutionary history. Taking up a new hobby or activity may assist us in refocusing our efforts and resources.
- If one is feeling down, permit oneself to indulge in a few minutes of pleasure. This is particularly important when one is feeling down. One may get a taste of what the NPR Joy Generator has to offer by using it.

- Focus one’s emphasis on the positive. It is possible to cultivate a joyful mentality, but doing so requires work. The three excellent things staying active throughout the day can assist one in maintaining a watchful eye out for the positives.
- In contrast, try to contain one’s negative thoughts. Spending time with people who have a pessimistic outlook has a direct impact on us, whether it be via the influence of a buddy who is always moaning, poisonous relationships with family members, or gossipy colleagues. It is acceptable to establish boundaries [1].
- Put one’s energy into things that give a life purpose, rather than worrying about how much money one can make.
- Talk to one’s own primary care physician about whether or not the medicines taken might have an impact on the capacity to enjoy life, particularly if one is using antidepressants [8,9].

The unexpected advantages of being happy

Increasing one’s capacity to discover pleasure may give long-term health advantages, regardless of the adjustments made to their frame of mind or to the activities done on a regular basis. The mental mood has the potential to boost the function of the immune system (immune cells even have receptors for neurotransmitters). The release of stress hormones can be lowered, improvements in pain and sadness may be made, and interventions that boost pleasure can improve them all. Finding ways to increase one’s happiness has been shown to make people live longer [10].

Conclusion

Develop an understanding of one’s own interests and values—what motivates them to eagerly get out of bed in the morning? Documenting these aspects may facilitate the acquisition of lucidity. Determine activities that are in accordance with values and interests. Engaging in pursuits that offer happiness may enhance motivation and satisfaction over extended durations. Evaluate individual talents and weaknesses—being candid about innate abilities is crucial for providing guidance towards the correct path. Establish a clear set of immediate objectives, ranging from acquiring a new proficiency to engaging in an enjoyable pastime, to enhance the ability to maintain concentration on long-term aspirations.

Availability of data and material

All data are available in the manuscript and they are shown in figures, tables, and supplement files.

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