



Happiness Is Not a Goal:

It's a Way of Being

Moving beyond chasing happiness to understanding it

Moving Beyond the "Chase"

The Arrival Fallacy

Most of us suffer from the "Arrival Fallacy"—the belief that once we arrive at a certain milestone, we will finally be happy. However, as our **Uncommon Wisdom** reminds us, your dream job might not be what you expect, and there will always be things you can't afford.

- **The Chase:** You get the raise, feel a "high" for two weeks, and then immediately begin looking for the next thing to make you feel that way again. This is known as the **Hedonic Treadmill**.
- **The Way of Being:** You appreciate the raise, but your sense of self-worth and joy remains rooted in your daily habits, your relationships, and your internal peace, regardless of the bank balance.

Happiness vs. Meaning

Happiness is often confused with "pleasure" (eating good food, buying new clothes). But pleasure is fleeting. **Meaning** is what sustains us through the "messy middle" of life.

- **Example:** Raising a child or starting a business is often stressful and "unhappy" in the short term, but it provides a deep sense of fulfillment and a "way of being" that is far more stable than temporary pleasure.
- **Example:** Mastering a Craft (The "Violinist's Journey") - If you look at the daily life of someone learning a difficult skill like the violin, the "short-term" experience is often filled with frustration. There are hours of repetitive practice, physical discomfort in the fingers, and the ego-bruising reality of hitting wrong notes. If that person were chasing "happiness" as a fleeting emotion, they would quit within the first week because the practice itself doesn't always feel "fun."

Reframing Common Myths

The Myth	The Reframe (The Reality)
"I should be happy all the time"	Emotions are Seasonal. Happiness is one room in a house. You cannot live in one room forever. A healthy "way of being" includes space for sadness, frustration, and growth.
"Successful people are happy"	Happy people are successful. Success (as traditionally defined) doesn't guarantee joy. However, having a joyful "way of being" makes you more resilient and creative, which often leads to success.
"Happiness is a choice"	Happiness is a practice. You can't always "choose" to feel happy during a tragedy, but you can practice habits (like gratitude or movement) that make happiness more likely to return.

The Pillars of Happiness as a "Way of Being"

Pillar 1: Radical Presence (The "Now" Habit)

Happiness lives in the present moment. Anxiety lives in the future; regret lives in the past.

- **The Practice:** "Micro-Joys." Throughout the day, stop and notice one small thing that is going well—the smell of coffee, the feeling of the sun, or a quick laugh with a colleague.
- **Example:** Instead of scrolling through your phone while eating lunch (thinking about work), you focus entirely on the taste of the food. You are "being" happy in that moment.

Pillar 2: Emotional Agility

A healthful "way of being" means not fighting your negative emotions.

- **The Practice:** When you feel sad or stressed, don't judge yourself for it. Acknowledge it: "I am feeling stressed right now, and that's okay."
- **Example:** Accepting that "Personal growth is not a straight line" allows you to be at peace even when you are having a bad day. This prevents "unhappiness about being unhappy."

Pillar 3: Contribution and Connection

We are wired for connection. Happiness as a way of being is often found in looking outward rather than inward.

- **The Practice:** Perform one small act of kindness daily with no expectation of return.
- **Example:** Helping a neighbor or truly listening to a friend. The "high" from helping others lasts significantly longer than the "high" from buying something for yourself.

The "Way of Being" Case Study

The Subject:

David, who thought he would be happy once he retired.

The Chase:

David spent 40 years "grinding," ignoring his health and hobbies, thinking retirement was the "finish line" for happiness. When he retired, he felt bored, lonely, and depressed. He had no "way of being" other than "working."

The Redefinition:

1. **Identity Shift:** David stopped seeing himself as "Retired" and started seeing himself as a "Student of Life."
2. **Small Habits:** He began gardening and volunteering. These weren't "goals" to achieve; they were ways to spend his time that felt meaningful.
3. **Accepting Reality:** He accepted that his body was older and "perfect health" wasn't possible. He focused on what he *could* do (walking, light social activity).
4. **Result:** David found that he was happier in his simple, daily routine than he ever was while chasing the big "retirement dream."

Summary: Designing Your Day

To make happiness a way of being, look at your next 24 hours. Don't look for a "big win." Look for:

- **One moment of presence** (No distractions).
- **One act of connection** (Reach out to someone).
- **One act of self-care** (Listen to what your body needs).

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