



The 5 deepest reasons you're not happier

(and how to start changing each one)

1. Evolution has specifically designed* you to *not* feel lasting fulfillment.



Natural selection did not prioritize happiness.

It prioritized rewarding behaviors that passed on your genes.
That's why you always want more: resources, mates, territory, etc.

The problem is: You imagine that finally achieving your goal or getting that thing will keep you happy.

But, by design, **the satisfaction is always temporary.**
(This is known as the “hedonic treadmill”).

** To be accurate, evolution didn't “design” you as some conscious process.
Rather, traits that led to survival and reproduction were passed on over time.
This is a complex phenomenon that I'm simplifying to explain the core point.*

1. Evolution has specifically designed you to *not* feel lasting fulfillment.



Get started on changing this:

- ▶ Anticipate that **your life will be a zig-zagging line**. Ups and downs. That's normal.
- ▶ Since your default “programming” is to always want more, **counteract that with gratitude for what you already have**. Every day, name a few small things you're grateful for. Not the same things every day—find something small but new.
- ▶ Instead of relying on the high of reaching a specific goal, **use systems and habits**:
“I’m going to finish a marathon” ➡ “I’m going to run every morning (even once I’ve completed the marathon; or, maybe I don’t even end up doing the marathon at all, but I still run).”

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2. The culture you grew up in taught you to prioritize the wrong things.



Capitalism (and whiteness culture) *falsely* says:

- ▶ **You should be busy.** Productivity is #1. Don't waste time.
- ▶ **Everything is a competitive hierarchy to climb**, so you must constantly compare yourself to everyone else (even though you're all on unique paths that started at different places).
- ▶ **Happiness comes from “maximizing your potential,”** so you must make a huge impact (which isn't realistic for most people, leading to disappointment and self-criticism).
- ▶ **Focus on “providing as much value” as possible in life** (i.e., externally visible, quantifiable success markers you can put on your LinkedIn profile).

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- ▶ **Try to do it all so you don't "waste your life"** or feel FOMO and regret (even though the number of choices today is overwhelming and doing it all is impossible).
 - ▶ **Focus on independent achievement** and self-sufficiency (rather than inter-dependence and ensuring everyone in your community is well-supported and feels belonging).
 - ▶ **Prioritize looking good** instead of vulnerably asking for help (which makes you feel like an impostor, since no one else admits they don't know what they're doing either).

If you want to be happy, **this is all wrong**. You were taught all those things, so you try (consciously or unconsciously) to uphold them. This makes you unhappy, lonely, and anxious.

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Get started on changing this:

- ▶ Don't let capitalism tell you what a good life looks like.
Define your own success metrics.
- ▶ **Slow down**—there's no hurry. Journey over destination.
- ▶ Instead of comparing yourself to others, **compare present-you to past-you.**
- ▶ **It's ok to aim small** and not have to change the world.
Focus on helping your local community instead (then, keep going from there if you feel inspired).

3. You want the core rules of reality to be different than they are.



Convinced that acquiring a thing or achieving a goal will make you happy? Then, naturally, you'll become attached to that outcome.

The more the perceived value, the more you'll cling to it tightly.
You'll feel distressed if it seems like you're about to lose it.

Unfortunately, the very nature of time & entropy means that everything changes and nothing lasts forever. You can't predict the future or be in complete control of any outcome. **The truth of reality is constant change and uncertainty.**

Too much attachment to a specific outcome, then, means suffering. But, you want your good mood to stay! You don't want loved ones to die! You want your pain to disappear! **But as long as you keep hoping reality will operate differently, you'll keep being disappointed.**

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3. You want the core rules of reality to be different than they are.



Get started on changing this:

- ▶ **Practice Buddhist meditation and Stoic exercises to develop less attachment and more equanimity**—i.e., calmly accepting the truth of reality as it is rather than wishing it were different.

It's ok to have goals and desires; but, for outcomes you can't fully control (i.e., most things in life), you'll be happier if you loosen your grip. (You can get started with my free 7-day beginner's meditation series at michaelcaloz.com/meditation)

- ▶ Prepare yourself for hard times by **remembering that nothing stays the same forever**. Prioritize time with loved ones. Remember you might die tomorrow. Go for a walk with no destination in mind, and stop to smell flowers along the way.

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4. You take the thoughts of your analytical mind too seriously.



Close your eyes and simply observe what happens in your mind.
Try to keep your attention focused only on your breath.

Why is that hard? Because **you're not in control of your thoughts.**
The truth is that thoughts simply pop into existence (trust me: I meditate for 1-2 hours/day, and that fact is very clear to me).

Most of those thoughts are irrelevant to what you're doing (you relive regrets, rehearse the future, or daydream about what-if).

Thoughts appear out of nowhere. You don't create them. And yet, **you take them seriously** (simply because you hear them in your head). Thought-chains sweep you up like a wave. But many of these thoughts aren't important or even true. **You find yourself carefully considering them anyway, so you suffer.**

4. You take the thoughts of your analytical mind too seriously.



Get started on changing this:

- ▶ **Practice noticing whether or not a thought is relevant** to what you're doing in this moment. If it's not, take a deep breath and focus on your 5 senses until that thought softens and passes on.
- ▶ **Be discerning about whether this is a thought you actually believe**, or if it's just a well-worn pattern in your mental circuitry (or someone else's voice speaking, like a parent).
What if you didn't actually have to take every thought seriously?

5. You focus so much on your mind that you disregard the rest of you.



You're a smart person, so surely you can think your way to being happier, right? Unfortunately, no—**your conscious thinking mind is not the master of your system.**

The real part of you pulling the strings is your feelings. As a living organism, you have a basic drive: This feels good, so I move toward it. This feels bad, so I stay away from it.

When you feel passionate & purposeful, helpful thoughts arise.
When you feel depressed & jealous, self-defeating thoughts arise.

(Yes, it's a two-way street between mind and body, but...) You prioritize the mind too often and **disregard the wisdom of the body**—your gut, your feelings, and your self-care (not to mention dealing with unresolved trauma, which lives in the body).

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5. You focus so much on your mind that you disregard the rest of you.



Get started on changing this:

- ▶ **Prioritize self-care** (e.g., sleep, nutrition, exercise, taking breaks, slowing down). Ask for help when you need it.
- ▶ **Find ways to move your body** and get out of your head.
- ▶ **Train yourself to get more in touch with your feelings** (yes, even the challenging ones). Learn to trust other parts of yourself beyond your analytical mind. Remember that you can't simply logically convince yourself to think only positive, helpful thoughts when you're feeling depressed or overwhelmed.

Summary



1. Evolution has specifically designed you to not feel lasting fulfillment. *Practice: Accept zig-zags, systems over goals*



2. The culture you grew up in taught you to prioritize the wrong things. *Practice: Slow down, define your own success metrics*



3. You want the core rules of reality to be different than they are. *Practice: Buddhist meditation, Stoic practices*



4. You take the thoughts of your analytical mind too seriously. *Practice: Notice what's relevant, don't believe all thoughts*



5. You focus so much on your mind that you disregard the rest of you. *Practice: Self-care, train yourself to notice & trust feelings*

Want help?



Thanks for reading.

As you can see, this is hard work to do alone. Deeply ingrained patterns are holding you back from feeling as much happiness and fulfillment as you'd like (and deserve).

I spent a lot of my adult life feeling depressed, anxious, and unclear on my purpose. I wondered how so many other people seemed so happy (on the outside at least). What was I missing?

I don't have all the answers, but I managed to find a way out—to reach a level of aliveness I didn't know was possible. And I've been able to help a lot of other people do the same.

Find out more at www.MichaelCaloz.com.