

Finding Meaning in the Everyday: 8 Ways to Get More Out of Life

Americans' happiness levels hit new lows last year, with a University of Chicago study cited by NBC News finding just 14% calling themselves "very happy" with their lives in 2020.

That's not exactly surprising. But it is disappointing. Too many of us can't seem to find meaning in everyday life.

Are you among them? Perhaps it's time for some changes. Small changes, at first—changes that eventually add up to something big, perhaps even life-changing. Here's what you can do right now to begin seeking meaning and get more out of life.

1. Set—and achieve—one small goal every week. Just one small goal every week. It might be as simple as committing to a 15-minute period of self-reflection every evening or a promise to your family that you'll be home for dinner every night. Whatever form these goals take, keep them coming, and treat each one as a little victory when you reach it.



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2. Begin to approach life as a personal journey. You've heard the popular wisdom about life being a journey and all that. Sure, it's cheesy, but seeing life as one long voyage of discovery can really help us find meaning in the ordinary. That's what happened to Mike Signorelli, a former atheist who found religion later in life and set in motion a journey to become founding pastor of V1 Church, a fast-growing congregation in the New York City area. You don't have to convert to a new faith to enjoy an awakening like

Signorelli's; you only have to change how you interact with the world.

3. Volunteer one hour per month (then another, and another and ...). Helping the less fortunate is an amazing way to find meaning while feeling like you're actually making a difference in the world. Start small, just one hour per month, and build from there as you get more comfortable.

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4. Sign up for an "extracurricular" that speaks to you. This might be a professional group, a book club, a neighborhood or homeowners' association. It doesn't matter what form it takes. What matters is your getting involved, meeting your neighbors and colleagues, building connections that add value to your life and, hopefully, stand the test of time.

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5. Channel your experiences in writing or video. Your nightly period of self-reflection might well involve writing in a journal. Even if not, commit to channeling your daily experiences in writing or video. Make it a goal to write one blog post (keeping it private for now if you prefer) or put together one personal video each week. This exercise is guaranteed to teach you things you never knew about yourself.

6. End or redirect relationships that add negativity to your

life. Because you don't have time for them. Use the old "it's not you, it's me" excuse if you must. It's true, after all; it's your decision to say no to negative influences.

7. Strive to be more like those who inspire you. Mentors, famous people you've always looked up to, the "super-parent" down the street. Whoever these people are, take inspiration from them. See the world through their eyes, learn from their experiences and progress toward greater self-knowledge.

8. Start from the end and work backward. This exercise is not a comfortable one for most people. Who wants to imagine that they've reached the end of their days, that they have no more of life left to enjoy? It's enough to make you hold on desperately to every last fleeting feeling, experience, interaction.

And that's precisely the point. When you imagine yourself on your deathbed, looking back at your life and all its regrets, it's no longer difficult to see what's really important and what you can do without. If the meaning of life doesn't quite crystallize for you, you'll at least see more clearly the path to achieve that meaning—whatever form it takes.

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You deserve to get more out of life. You really do.

Look at it this way. You might feel perfectly comfortable, even satisfied, in your day to day. You might feel as if you have a good handle on this thing called life.

Or maybe not. Many of us aren't even close, despite outward appearances.

Regardless, one thing is almost certainly true: You are not operating at your full God-given potential.

Don't blame yourself. It's not your fault. Life happens. It is full of missed opportunities and unfulfilled dreams. But, realize it or not, you have the power to seize those opportunities and fulfill those dreams. You and you alone; no one can do it for you. Take these steps to find meaning in the everyday, and you'll find yourself inching ever closer to a life that's truly well-lived.

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