

The everlasting chase for success and recognition

Society



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“ You aren’t here to make friends, you’re here to learn. ” I can still hear my father’s rich stern voice unsuccessfully assuring me that if I worked hard in school, happiness and friendships would come naturally. He looked at me with sympathetic eyes through the rearview mirror of his tan 2004 Honda Sonata. My sixth-grade self sank down in the back seat, low enough to where I could rest my chin on the seatbelt strap that crossed my chest. I stared at my wrinkled homework assignment through the pink mesh material my backpack was made of and rolled my eyes with annoyance. “ You have the rest of your life to make all of the friends you want, but right now let’s focus on what’s important,” he continued with a gentle grin.

So that’s what I did. I studied vigorously for next week’s algebra test. I pre-read the lessons in my English class, I even attended Saturday school. This cycle continued to my high school career and before I knew it, I was graduating at the top of my class, regretting that I missed out on so many high school experiences, that is. The hard work paid off in the end, but it came at the price of regret and unhappiness. We have the rest of our lives to chase success, but our few years in college are when we are most malleable, creative, and free. Therefore, we should use this precious time to discover our purpose and appreciate what makes us happy instead of constantly searching for it. We often seek happiness through success. However, the problem is we seek happiness instead of accepting the moments in the process.

During our college careers are when we will feel the most uncertain and anxious, therefore, embracing these moments and doing what makes us happy is crucial at this point in time. Typically, an everlasting cycle starts

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sometime in our late childhood: work hard in middle school so you can understand the material taught in high school. Work hard in high school so you can get into a good college. Do good in college so you can land a good career. Do good in your career so that you can one day get promoted. When you get promoted continue to work hard so you won't get replaced anytime soon, then so on and so forth. At the moment we may not even realize that rather we reach our goals or not doesn't matter. We will either be left disappointed with ourselves and constantly wonder what could have been or proud for a while then back on the hunt for another dream to chase.

Regardless of the outcome, we're left feeling unfulfilled and unhappy. Emily Esfahani Smith is an author and journalist, she is also an editor at the Manhattan Institute. She has an interesting take on happiness and how to attain it. When she took on the stage to deliver her eye-opening TED Talk, she stated " The data showed chasing happiness can make people unhappy. [...] There's an emptiness gnawing away at people, and you don't have to be clinically depressed to feel it. Sooner or later I think we all wonder: is this all there is? " (00: 52-1: 27)

In other words, Smith believes overtime our meaning in life devalues as we continue to search for it through success. We end up feeling lost and empty when there isn't anything more in life to live for. When we appreciate the here and now, we feel more satisfied and content with who we are. At the moment we can get so caught up in wanting to thrive, that we become completely oblivious to the fact that we never take out the time to think of someone other than ourselves, especially in college. We pay tens of thousands of dollars a year which is a lot of money to invest if you aren't

fully invested yourself. Therefore, it's almost as if we're obligated to do well. We get so wrapped up in succeeding that we never have time to realize our purpose. When we find purpose, we use our personal qualities and values to serve others as best we can. Smith continues to state, " Now, finding your purpose is not the same thing as finding that job that makes you happy. Purpose is less about what you want than what you give" (4: 47-4: 53) Smith is insisting that purpose and success often get misconstrued. Success is the path that leads to your personal happiness, which is usually an unsuccessful route. Purpose, on the other hand, is when you dig deep from within yourself to discover the reason for your being here. When we discover our purpose, we find our meaning in life, which is of much more value than a temporary high an achievement can give. I lie in my bed motionless, fast asleep with my face so smushed into my chemistry textbook I thought the words transferred to my cheek.

The tv screen lit up my cramped dorm room with a deep blue hue that highlighted the pile of papers that accumulated on my bed. My eyes are open, but I still feel as if I'm dreaming. My mind felt cloudy, my body ached, and I couldn't think straight. That's when it hit me, I realize I'm rotating in the same cycle I entered in middle school. I pass on spending time with friends to study. I deprive myself of sleep, reviewing until I pass out when a test is due the next day. And I stress myself out if I make simple mistakes. I put the importance of success before my own happiness, and that was leading me down a bottomless pit of emptiness. As Smith implied, there is so much more to life than pursuing a good career or making good grades, and when I came to this realization it changed my whole outlook on college and

life in general. College is more about the journey than it is the destination. It's the first time we can express who we truly are without our parents drastically altering it, and the last time before we're expected to conform to society's standards. Therefore, we should use this precious time to find our meaning in life, because this is in fact where our legacy begins.