

To achieve  
happiness, don't  
confuse pleasure with  
fulfillment

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The easiest way to waste decades of your life is to mistake pleasure for fulfillment.

Pleasure lives in the realm of now. It's made of feeling and emotion, which are both very important, but predictably unstable. It's impossible to base a meaningful life solely on the pursuit of pleasure.

At the extreme end of pleasure: over-eating, over-sleeping, chronic masturbation and sex addiction, television, benders, cocaine and ice cream (the verdict is still out here). Push the button, get the stimulus. Constant stimulation to dull the pain, anxiety and existential uncertainty of being a human in society.

It feels good to feel good. So why not try to feel good all the time? Pass the mint chocolate chip, please.

Fulfillment is concerned with your highest vision for the future. It doesn't equate pain or discomfort today with pain or discomfort tomorrow. It assumes that the best is always yet to come. Those looking for fulfillment out of life will do things that aren't fun now, to reap massive rewards later.

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In his book , Indian spiritual guru Paramahansa Yogananda recalls a conversation between a sage and his student: The student exclaimed, " Master, you are wonderful.... You have renounced riches and comforts to seek God and teach us wisdom."

To which the wise sage replied:

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“ You are reversing the case! I have left a few paltry rupees, a few petty pleasures, for a cosmic empire of endless bliss. How then have I denied myself anything? I know the joy of sharing the treasure. Is that a sacrifice? The shortsighted worldly folk are verily the real renunciates! They relinquish an unparalleled divine possession for a poor handful of earthly toys!”

This irony captures the essence of seeking pleasure over fulfillment.

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### **The other way toward fulfillment.**

Training for a triathlon, starting a business, writing a book, recording an album. All of these things can bring pleasure in the short term. But more often than not, they do not. They are not fun. They are a constant struggle. They take years to master. They are never urgent and the easiest things to postpone.

(Especially if a new season of *Walking Dead* is on.)

But these are also the types of activities that, done day after day, lead to the highest quality of life and most pleasure long term. Not the acute, “ OMG this is so fun” type of pleasure but the more subtle, albeit equally exhilarating feeling of overarching satisfaction with one’s life. These types of activities make you feel like you’re worth a damn. And that’s important. Because you are.

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Pleasure versus fulfillment is the difference between spending your time and investing it. Or the difference between consuming and creating. The time will pass anyway, but at the end of a lifetime what will you have to show for it? Some of us will have as evidence that we were here 100, 000 hours of television, a leased Mercedes and a bunch of clothes we got sick of last year. Others will have created a legacy that leaves the world a better place and makes a difference for people we've never even met.

Which one will you be?