

# What is happiness and how do we get it?

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If you could design a universe with a race of intelligent beings, how would you design their environment and their existence? What would they spend their time doing? What would bring them meaning and happiness? How would their existence be similar to or different from that of humans?

It turns out that there isn't any fundamental choice in the matter if their existence is to have meaning. In my comprehensive theory of human life, I explain why this is true and what the meaning of life is.

***The meaning of life is found in the tradeoff between egoism and altruism in the context of human mortality.***

Happiness, in turn, is found through achieving meaning.

To illustrate this idea, could you find meaning living in isolation from other people, say if you were the only person in the universe? Could you find happiness living in isolation from other people? This theme is expressed in the ancient creation story in Genesis 2, which says that Adam needed another person as partner.

The reader interested in the brain will be interested in knowing that scientists call certain kinds of neurons ***mirror neurons*** because they fire when someone else is perceived as experiencing a given experience. In different terms, these are ***empathy neurons***. Applying this idea to happiness, it says that we achieve happiness, not just in doing something for ourself, but also in helping someone else find happiness.

I'll explain my theory of the meaning of life, and then we'll discuss the more general topic of happiness. So if this subject sounds interesting, come and tell us what you think!

In my book *Why Human Life Makes Sense* (2011), chapter 3 is devoted to the topic of meaning. In my book *Why? In Pursuit of the Ultimate Answer* (2008), see the index entry for the meaning tradeoff.