

Finding Things in Your Life That Will Increase Inner Satisfaction

Objective

To build inner satisfaction through identifying your talents and strengths and increasing time spent in activities that make you feel successful.

You Should Know

There are many reasons why teens feel that they are not successful in their lives. Their expectations may exceed their abilities. They may have parents who steer them in directions that don't suit their interests. They may be perfectionistic and set standards that are nearly impossible to achieve.

There are ways to measure success, but the most important kind of success is "inner satisfaction." In other words, even if there were no grades, money, or even external recognition involved, you would still pursue this activity. Inner satisfaction is true success.

Psychologists say that inner satisfaction comes from doing activities that feel almost effortless. Time goes by and you hardly think about it. They call this state of mind "flow." Flow refers to activities that help you grow and learn, yet they are also challenging. Playing video games, shopping, hanging out with friends, or watching videos are fun, but they are not what we are talking about when we are referring to flow. These activities are pleasurable, but they don't bring you a sense of success or inner satisfaction. Flow occurs when you tackle a challenging activity that others might consider work, yet you find these activities engrossing even when they are difficult.

What to Do

What are the activities that you do that bring you flow? Circle any activities that you enjoy so much that they seem almost effortless.

- music
- dance
- writing
- art
- drama
- team sports
- individual sports
- martial arts
- chess

- debate
- politics
- volunteer work
- environmental activism
- social activism
- entrepreneurship
- crafts
- building things
- inventing things
- teaching
- tutoring
- public speaking
- working with animals
- being in nature
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Which of the above activities do you participate in now?

Are there activities you used to do where you experienced flow, but you no longer do them?

How Much Do You Experience Flow?

We all do lots of things in a week. Some things are not fun at all, yet they have to be done. You do them because you don't really have a choice. Other activities are tolerable, even though you don't prefer them. It is worth noting that you can still find satisfaction in activities that you don't particularly enjoy. Sometimes just completing a difficult task can be satisfying. You might enjoy doing something that pleases others. The important thing is finding balance in your life.

Reflections on This Exercise

How much time during the week do you spend on activities that give you a high level of satisfaction?

Are there ways to make activities you don't really like more satisfying?

Can you think of ways to include more activities that give you a sense of flow? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?
