

Life is Not About Being Happy

Advanced (C1-C2)



WARM UP

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. What does “a good life” mean to you — peace, purpose, pleasure, or passion?
2. When was the last time you felt content, even if life wasn’t perfect?
3. Do you think we’re expected to be happy all the time? Why or why not?

Part 2. Complete each expression by filling in the missing word. Which of these sentence feels most relevant to your life right now?

1. Even when life is falling apart, some people manage to **keep a** _____ **face** and hide how they really feel.
2. When something wonderful happens, like getting your dream job, it’s natural to feel absolutely **over the** _____ with joy.
3. After losing someone close, or when plans collapse, it’s easy to feel completely **down in the** _____ for days at a time.
4. Sometimes you just have to **grin and** _____ **it** when life gets tough, because complaining won’t make the situation better.
5. Many people dream of escaping the city and finding their own **slice of** _____ in a peaceful corner of the countryside.

Part 3. Read the short dialogues and discuss the meaning of the highlighted words or phrases.

A: "I sometimes feel like life is just a constant struggle."

B: "True, but maybe our **burdens** don't have to mean failure — they could mean we're learning."

A: "I get so frustrated with my mistakes."

B: "But those mistakes could be part of your **psychological understanding** of life."

A: "I just want calm and certainty."

B: "But maybe a bit of **striving** keeps us alive and engaged."

A: "I feel ashamed that I'm not happier."

B: "Don't — maybe you're part of a unique and **estimable cohort** of people who think deeply."

A: "My days are exhausting."

B: "Yes, but being **shaken as if we'd crossed mountains** is sometimes a sign of courage."

A: "You seem a bit **perturbed** today."

B: "Yeah, I can't stop thinking about where my life is heading."

A: "I wish I could quiet all these **agitations** in my mind."

B: "Maybe they're just signs that you still care about how your life turns out."

A: "From this **vantage point**, I see that my past struggles actually made sense."

B: "Exactly — perspective changes everything once we step back."

VIDEO ACTIVITY

Part 1. Before watching the video, discuss the following question.

What do you think makes a "good life" — happiness, stability, or interesting experiences?

Part 2. Watch the video once. Write down the main points or ideas in your own words.

Main points or ideas

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Part 3. Watch the video again and discuss the following questions.

1. What are some things that regularly spoil our ambitions for happiness?
2. According to the speaker, what is the “secondary layer” of unhappiness?
3. How does reframing burdens change our perception of them?
4. What does the speaker suggest we may lack, and what might we gain instead?
5. Why might a perturbed life still be considered a good life?
6. What might someone reflect on from their deathbed, according to the video?

Part 4. Read the statements and decide if they are True (T), False (F), or Not Mentioned (NM) according to the video.

1. The speaker says many of us secretly feel we are failing at happiness compared to others.
2. According to the speaker, our daily problems prove that we are not intelligent enough to live a good life.
3. The speaker suggests that what we lack in contentment, we may gain in psychological insight and experience.
4. The video states that most people manage to go through life without ever experiencing serious unhappiness.

VIDEO FOLLOW-UP

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. Do you agree that happiness is overrated?
2. Can you think of a time when unhappiness actually taught you something valuable?
3. Would you rather have a calm life or an interesting life? Why?

Part 2. Read these quotes from the video and react: agree, disagree, or expand with examples.

1. "We are unhappy that we are unhappy."
2. "What we lack in contentment, we may make up for in insight."
3. "Perhaps a good life can be compatible with being fairly perturbed most days."

Part 3. Read these short reflections and answer the questions.

"Happiness for me is being with people who understand me, even if life is chaotic."

Do you agree that connection matters more than calm?

"I think happiness is overrated. I'd rather live with passion and risk than be safe but bored."

Would you take more risks if you valued passion over security?

"For me, happiness is balance — not constant joy, but not constant stress either."

Do you think balance is realistic, or just an ideal?

FINAL THOUGHTS...

Discuss the questions below to reflect on what you've learnt during this lesson.

1. What did you learn about happiness and unhappiness today?
2. How can reframing difficulties change your outlook?
3. Do you feel more pressure to be happy, or more pressure to be successful?
4. What will you remind yourself of the next time you feel unhappy?

WRAP-UP TASK (OPTIONAL HOMEWORK)

Write a one-page journal entry responding to this question:

When was the last time you felt unhappy but later realised that experience helped you grow?

Include:

- What happened
- How you felt at the time
- What you learned from it
- Whether you now see it differently