The Four Archetypes of Happiness

Happiness

Exercise

(30 min

Client

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Happiness is essential to living a satisfied life [1]. Indeed, happy people tend to experience low levels of fear, anger, and depression. They are likely to be healthier; have positive, fulfilling, high-quality social relationships; and be motivated to pursue long-term goals despite short-term costs [2]. While authentic long-term happiness reflects a balance between present and future enjoyment, people often seek happiness in detrimental ways.

The four archetypes of happiness describe how individuals approach happiness [3]. These archetypes are 1) The Hedonist, 2) The Rat Racer, 3) The Nihilist, and 4) The Happy Person. The Hedonist prioritizes short-term enjoyment over long-term fulfillment and will try to maximize in-the-moment pleasure while minimizing pain [3]. Conversely, Rat Racers will sacrifice current pleasure, delay gratification, and hyper-focus on future goals at the expense of present enjoyment [3].

The Nihilist believes their life has no purpose or meaning and has little hope for present or future happiness. Individuals who fall into this archetype tend to feel disconnected and lack a sense of control, direction, and motivation [3,4]. The Happy Person is the ideal archetype. Individuals in this category understand that present actions can provide in-themoment pleasure and lay the foundation for a happy future [4,5].

While people are likely to experience and move between these four archetypes to varying degrees, spending excessive time in the Hedonist, Rat Racer, or Nihilist categories can be detrimental to happiness [3]. This exercise will help clients understand and determine their happiness archetype and identify ways to change their approach to happiness to allow for present enjoyment and long-term satisfaction.

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Goal

The goal of this exercise is to help clients understand the four archetypes of happiness. With a deeper understanding of how people seek happiness, clients can determine which archetype reflects their approach to happiness and identify ways to change their approach so it allows for present enjoyment and long-term satisfaction.



Advice

- Clients should understand that happiness does not mean they should not experience any negative feelings whatsoever, nor does it mean they should be perpetually cheerful. Even happy people feel unhappy sometimes.
- Clients are likely to exhibit elements of multiple archetypes at various points in their lives. For instance, in some circumstances, the sacrifice of present-moment pleasure is necessary to achieve something in the future. Likewise, indulging in an unhealthy meal or playing a video game for immediate enjoyment is not necessarily bad. However, when taken to an extreme, the Hedonistic, Nihilistic, and Rat Race archetypes will have a negative effect on long-term happiness.



References

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- 4. Somwong, K. (2021). Statistical evidence on how happiness alters in different stages of life according to the hamburger model of happiness. The Eurasia Proceedings of Health, Environment and Life Sciences (EPHELS), 1, 46-51.
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The Four Archetypes of Happiness

Happiness offers many benefits, like improved physical and mental health, better social relationships, and the motivation to pursue long-term goals, for example. While most people want to experience authentic long-term happiness, understanding how to achieve it can be challenging. The four archetypes of happiness can help improve this understanding.

The four archetypes of happiness represent different ways of approaching happiness. This exercise will help you determine your archetype and identify ways to change how you seek happiness so you can move closer to achieving authentic long-term happiness.

Step 1: Understanding the four archetypes of happiness

The four archetypes of happiness categorize people into one of four archetypes depending on how they seek happiness: The Hedonist, The Rat Racer, The Nihilist, and The Happy Person.

Let's look at each of these archetypes in more detail. As you read through the descriptions below, think about which of the four you relate to most.

The Four Archet	types of Happiness
The Hedonist	The Rat Racer
 If you: embrace in-the-moment happiness at the expense of the future maximize immediate gratification live for the moment with little consideration for the future act impulsively engage in behaviors that bring immediate pleasure regardless of the consequences (like scrolling social media at the expense of finishing a work project) You fall into the Hedonist archetype. 	 If you: get so caught up in what's next that you overlook the here and now sacrifice present happiness in anticipation of future happiness chase your next goal without really enjoying what you have already achieved always strive for more and feel the need to be busy at all times prioritize your long-term goals over immediate pleasure You fall into the Rat Racer archetype.
The Nihilist	The Happy Person
If you:	If you:

present or the future feel like your life has little/no purpose or meaning

• believe that happiness is not attainable in the

- feel disconnected from others and lack a sense of
- belonging
- struggle with motivation or direction in life
- often experience feelings of apathy, hopelessness, or despair

You fall into the Nihilist archetype.

- pursue pleasure in the present moment but also have meaningful long-term goals
- engage in activities that will bring immediate enjoyment and also contribute to a fulfilling future
- have a positive outlook on life and are optimistic about the future
- are motivated to pursue your long-term goals despite short-term setbacks
- have a sense of purpose and meaning in life You fall into the Happy Person archetype.

While you are likely to experience and move between these four archetypes to varying degrees, too much time spent in the Hedonist, Rat Racer, or Nihilist category can be detrimental to happiness. The ideal archetype for sustained happiness is, perhaps unsurprisingly, The Happy Person.

Step 2: Determine your archetype

Take some time to consider the descriptions in the previous step and think carefully about which of the	se
four archetypes resonates with you most and reflects your approach to happiness.	

In whi	ich category d	o you currentl	y spend most	of your time	? Write your	response dov	vn in the sp	ace below.

Step 3: Reflect on your happiness archetype

Now that you have identified your current happiness archetype, you will take some time to reflect on this particular approach and think about the effect it has on you and your happiness. Consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

1. In your experience, what are the positive aspects of this archetype? If you cannot identify any pos	sitive
aspects, move on to question 3.	

2. Using the space below, write down 2-3 examples of when you have experienced the positive side of this archetype.
3. In your experience, what are the negative aspects of your happiness archetype?
4. Using the space below, write down 2-3 examples of when you have experienced negative aspects of this archetype.

Step 4: Identify what needs to change

Now that you have determined your happiness archetype, you can consider how to change your approach to find a balance that allows for present enjoyment and long-term satisfaction. This step involves finding ways to move closer to the Happy Person archetype. If you already fall into the Happy Person category, you can use this step to maintain real and sustainable happiness.

While the suggestions below are not exhaustive, they can inspire you to consider actions that will help change your approach to happiness.

If you fall into the **Hedonist** archetype, you can:

- Practice moderation by setting limits and considering the future consequences of your actions.
- Take some time to identify meaningful, long-term goals that offer a sense of purpose and direction.
- Rather than seeking immediate external rewards or pleasures, pursue activities that align with your values and foster a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, like volunteering or engaging in hobbies that provide a sense of purpose.

If you fall into the **Rat Racer** archetype, you can:

- Prioritize self-care and schedule time for relaxation, hobbies, and interests.
- Set boundaries and prioritize your responsibilities.
- Make time for personal relationships and build positive connections with other people.
- Practice mindfulness and appreciation for the present moment.

If you fall into the **Nihilist** archetype, you can:

- Schedule quality time with people you care about.
- Make an effort to build new strong, positive connections with others, either online or in person.
- Identify activities that you enjoy (or think you would enjoy) and commit to doing more of them.
- Set meaningful, achievable goals for the future.
- Think about what you are thankful for and keep a gratitude journal.
- Pay attention to negative thoughts and try to change your perspective by looking for the positives.

If you fall into the **Happy Person** archetype, you can:

- Continue to evaluate and adjust the balance between present-moment enjoyment and long-term fulfillment.
- Engage in activities that promote well-being and maintain a positive mindset.
- Maintain positive relationships and stay connected with others.
- Continue to set meaningful goals for the future.

1. What specific actions will you take to move closer to (or remain in) The Happy Person archetype?
2. What is the first step you will take to make this happen?

Step 5: Reflection

- In what ways did you find this exercise helpful?
- How has this exercise changed how you think about happiness?
- What did you find challenging about this exercise? How did you overcome this?
- What insights have you gained from completing this exercise?
- How will you use these insights to help you in the future?