

## Engagement for Your Goals

People that make an effort for something that matters to them, whether it is learning a new skill, changing jobs or raising their kids, are happier than people that don't have any goals. Working towards a goal, being involved in an activity that is challenging and appreciated, is even more predictive of happiness than actually achieving this goal.

5 advantages of engagement in pursuing your goals:

1. Pursuing a goal gives our life direction and a sense of control
2. Pursuing a goal makes us respect ourselves more, which makes us feel capable
3. Pursuing a goal gives our life structure and purpose
4. Pursuing a goal makes us use our time wisely and efficiently
5. Pursuing a goal brings us in contact with other people

What type of goals should we work towards?

- **Intrinsic goals:** goals that we choose ourselves and that are personally satisfying. Intrinsic goals help you to grow personally. They are meaningful to you.
- **Authentic goals:** goals that are rooted in our interests and core values. Sometimes, other people determine your goals for you. Your parents want you to study medicine or law. Your partner wants you to get a better paying job. We are happier when we pursue goals that are in line with what we really want to do with our lives.
- **Approach-goals.** Is the goal that you have something you want to work towards (making new friends) or something that you want to avoid (not being lonely)? Usually these are two sides of one medal. However, research shows that setting avoidance goals makes you less happy, more sad, more anxious and less healthy than setting approach-goals. When you focus on avoidance goals, you might end up creating a self-fulfilling-prophecy, where you actually get what you don't want.
- **Harmonious goals.** Your goals should supplement each other, and not conflict. Pursuing conflicting goals leads to frustration and takes away the courage to be really engaged. Sometimes you have to give up one of your goals if it conflicts with other important things in your life.

- **Flexible goals.** We have to realize that our goals are not always going to be the same. Our situations change (we get children, illnesses, disabilities) and these life changing events change our priorities. It is therefore important to select goals that fit with your life as it is right now, instead of sticking to goals that once were yours, but now don't fit with your life anymore.
- **Active goals.** Pursuing active goals (becoming member of a rowing club, being a blood donor, learn about art) makes people experience new challenges all the time. We can seize opportunities, and experience new things. This leads to a stream of positive experiences and a positive mood. Active goals are much better at withstanding hedonic adaptation than goals that are focused on a change in circumstances.