

If You Don't Enjoy It, Don't Do It!

Sometimes, I'll watch a really good film and think to myself "oh my, this film was so good that it totally changes everything for me. It fundamentally changes how I see film as an art form, in fact, maybe it even changes how I see life itself."

Of course, not every piece of media that I consume can be that good or impactful, but this reaction to some of the best films I've ever seen still made me wonder, why do I consume media or do any recreational activity that merely makes me feel "okay"?

I shouldn't just feel "okay" about the things that I do for fun, I should feel ecstatic about them. Even despite this, I still do things that merely make me feel "okay", in part because they require less motivation than activities that are more meaningful.

Sometimes, I spend hours browsing social media and watching YouTube videos, I never feel ecstatic about doing this, I barely even feel "okay" about it. These low quality leisure activities add absolutely no value to my life, they leave no lasting impact for me, I never think about them once I've finished and they provide no food for thought or reflection.

Whereas high quality leisure activities often add value to my life, make me think and provide a lot of subjects for reflection.

I'm not alone in my struggles. Most people seem to spend most of their free time idly watching TV or browsing social media. Is this enough? Is this a good way to spend your free time? I argue that it isn't, as humans we need so much more than to feel "okay".

In fact, I believe that this sort of passive idle consumption leads to depression and dissatisfaction in life.

As human beings, we require mental stimulation, we need to feel that we've accomplished something, we require meaningful activity. Cal Newport goes into this concept in depth in his book *Digital Minimalism*, it's well worth a read if this video interests you.

It's also worth mentioning that there's a restorative element to high quality leisure that is necessary for our mental health. This restorative element is not obtainable from low quality leisure, after all, when was the last time you felt mentally restored from browsing social media?

The reason why this restorative element is exclusive to high quality leisure likely has something to do with the fact that as humans we actually need to put in a little bit of effort in order to unwind, doing nothing just doesn't do it for us. Furthermore, we actually gain a lot of our identity from the high quality leisure activities we partake in, for example, if you're a runner you might identify as such, whereas you'd never see anyone identify as a social media browser. As humans, we need a concrete identity for ourselves, low quality leisure doesn't provide that.

If the problems are that we're doing things that merely make us feel "okay" and that we lack meaningful activity then the solution is quite obvious.

First, we need to cultivate some high quality leisure, that can be anything so long as it's meaningful to you and adds value to your life. You should feel electric while doing this high quality leisure activity, not merely content.

For me, high quality leisure means: watching art films, working on videos, reading, learning Latin and hanging out with friends. Admittedly though, I don't do those things as much as I ought to despite how much I enjoy them. My personal war on low quality leisure isn't over just yet.

It's worth mentioning here that a lot of people actually struggle to cultivate high quality leisure. They're so used to coming home from work or school and doing low quality leisure that they don't even know what else is out there.

To those people, I recommend going out there and experimenting. If you're not sure where to start you can find lists of high quality leisure activities online, go and look at them and try out whatever sparks your interest, eventually, you'll find a high quality leisure activity that you enjoy.

The next thing that we must do is eliminate low quality leisure from our lives. Simply not engaging with low quality leisure activities such as browsing social media or mindlessly watching TV is not enough. We must go as far to remove the temptation to do these things from our lives.

This might mean deleting social media apps and accounts and disconnecting your TV from your ariel, cable, the internet or whatever other means you use to get live TV or your streaming service of choice. Only then can we be truly free from our low quality leisure vices.

The reason why such extreme measures are needed is that low quality leisure activities are often deliberately addictive and by design require no effort on your part. Social media companies and TV producers know exactly how to keep your eyes on a screen.

As a result, when given the choice between a low quality leisure activity and a high quality leisure activity it's simply easier to choose the low quality leisure activity, which means that without removing temptation you're always going to default to doing a low quality leisure activity, no matter how much "will power" or "self control" you have.

However, you actually remove the temptation to engage with low quality media you'll be compelled to put in the effort to engage in a high quality leisure activity due to the unavailability of something "easier". In the short term this might make you feel bored as you're so used to low quality leisure activities and the quick dopamine fix that they provide you with, but in the long term it'll make you so much happier.

So, in conclusion, stop engaging with low quality leisure activities that bring you no real joy. Go out there and get some hobbies that make you feel truly electric! If you do that I promise you'll be so much happier as a result.

With that said though, I hope that this video added some value to your life. I thank you for watching it and I will see you in the next one!