

Reframing and Living a Good Life

The whole point of studying and practicing philosophy is to help us live a good life. While the details may differ for each person, we all share two fundamental needs if we hope to live a good life:

- **Purpose:** A mission or goal that gives meaning to our days. Without it, we merely exist, we survive, we “get through”, but we don’t truly live.
- **Happiness:** A sense of contentment and peace. The absence of negative emotions like anger or sadness.

Purpose + Happiness = Good Life

When purpose and happiness add up, we can honestly say we’re living a good life. It’s simple, right? I know that in the real world it’s much easier said than done. Sadly these two requirements, often work against each other, and you need both for that good life we seek.

Consider this example: You have a purpose, a goal to financially support your family, to be a great spouse and parent. To do that, you work hard, but the job frustrates, drains you and makes you unhappy. Your purpose is met, but your happiness suffers. The equation is unbalanced. On the other hand, those who chase only pleasure like the hard core addicts and people we deal with on the street, often lose sight of purpose entirely. Neither path leads to a truly good life.

Most people try to compromise, oscillating between purpose and happiness. They live in limbo. They settle for an “okay life” a “good enough life” not the good life we’re aiming for.

To do better, we must balance the equation. Stoicism specializes in this. One of its key tools is reframing (the skill of changing your perspective or changing how you think about things). It’s not self-deception; it’s consciously choosing thoughts that serve you. Reframing helps align purpose and happiness, guiding you to a good life.

“Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them”

– Seneca

“The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.”

– Marcus Aurelius

Here are some examples:

- Setback in purpose? Don't say, "I failed." Reframe it: "This is part of the journey; I'm not there yet."
- Boss yells at you? Instead of, "I'm having a bad day," Reframe it and think: "He must be having a bad day."
- Your plan not working out? Don't think, "My plan is bad." Reframe it and say: "I've discovered a way that doesn't work."
- Feeling overwhelmed? Instead of, "This is too much," Reframe it with: "This is a chance to test my limits."

Aside from profound loss or tragedy, nearly every situation in life can be reframed. If something threatens your happiness or purpose, then it is your job find a new perspective that keeps you moving forward. Use reframing to balance the good life equation.

“You have power over your mind - not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength”

– Marcus Aurelius

This is not a life hack, you are not tricking yourself. This isn't the “power of positive thinking”. You have a choice in every situation. Your thoughts are yours to command. Either a thought or point of view serves happiness and purpose or it doesn't. Either it serves the good life or it doesn't. Your first thoughts and impressions will often be negative and defeatist. Clinging to first impressions diminishes happiness and hinders purpose. Reframing is your second chance, your comeback. It's how you get things right.

I'm wishing you all a good life

Amor Fati

-Sgt. Steve