

The Best Way to Improve the Quality of Life 101.

It seems like we're all chasing the same timeline: graduate high school, get into college, land that internship that will look good on a resume, secure a good job, get promoted, keep climbing the corporate ladder- and on and on it goes.

The problem with today's society is that we're often so wrapped up in this hustle-and-bustle mindset that we forget what we already have right in front of us. It leaves us feeling unhappy, unfulfilled, and dissatisfied. There are even scientifically proven side effects of living this way - stress, pressure, and constant comparison- all of which can take a serious toll on our mental health.

Don't worry, we'll get to the solution soon, but first, let's unpack just how harmful this mindset can be.

One of the biggest dangers of the go-go-go lifestyle is that overworking yourself without any balance can be damaging to your mental health. A study focused on the link between job stress and mental health in special forces police officers found that high work stress and low support significantly increased mental health issues. Officers who experienced an imbalance between effort and reward were also eight times more likely to develop depression (Garbarino et al., 2013). If this is true for highly trained professionals, imagine how it plays out across millions of people caught in everyday workplace stress- constantly pushing, never resting.

This mindset also feeds into comparison- comparing your salary, your success, your lifestyle- and letting that determine your worth and happiness. Studies have shown that social comparison, such as judging yourself based on what others have or where they are in life, negatively affects mental health. It also makes you less content with what you already have, pulling your attention away from the good that's right in front of you.

Comparison is one of the most dangerous side effects of hustle culture. It convinces us that there's always something better, that we're somehow behind. But chasing validation through comparison is a race with no finish line. Even when you "win," you end up still feeling dissatisfied, because the goalposts keep moving.

Finally, this constant chase keeps you so focused on what's next that you forget to live the life that's happening right now. As John Lennon once said, "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." Although he wasn't talking about corporate ambition, the idea fits perfectly. We spend so much time striving for the next big thing that we miss the beauty of what's right under our feet. Life doesn't wait for you to slow down- it passes by quietly while you're looking ahead.

So, what's the answer? How do we stop this cycle and truly improve the quality of our lives? The answer is simple: gratitude.

Implementing a daily practice of gratitude can transform your mindset, boost your happiness, and help you appreciate the little things. And this isn't just motivational talk- there's research to back it up. A study examining individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic found that those who

kept a daily gratitude journal reported higher well-being and emotional resilience, even amid the chaos of 2020.

Other studies have shown a strong positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction.

Gratitude acts as an antidote to dissatisfaction- helping you feel fulfilled without needing to constantly achieve more. It also makes you more optimistic, allowing you to see the positive side of things and truly enjoy what you have. Gratitude is the key to being present, content, and improving the way you see life.

When you start practicing gratitude, you begin noticing small details you once overlooked- the warmth of the morning sun, a text from a friend, your favorite song playing unexpectedly. You stop needing grand achievements to feel fulfilled and instead find peace in the simplicity of everyday moments.

Now, I'm not saying that being content and grateful means settling for mediocrity or giving up your goals. It's not about letting go of your ambition — it's about learning to appreciate where you are while you work toward where you're going. Because if you're waiting to feel satisfied only when you "make it," get that promotion, or hit that salary number, you'll never actually feel satisfied.

Imagine this: you're lying in a hospital bed at the end of your life and realize you spent all your time chasing money and success, believing that once you got there, you'd finally be happy. But the truth is, you never allowed yourself to feel content. You blinked, and life- the laughter, the relationships, the memories- slipped past you while you were busy chasing more.

The real key to improving your quality of life- and escaping the harmful effects of the hustle-and-bustle mentality- is simple: stay grateful. Don't let life pass you by because you're too busy chasing what's next.

As Oprah Winfrey once said, "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Resources

Garbarino, S., Cuomo, G., Chiorri, C., & Magnavita, N. (2013). Association of work-related stress with mental health problems in a special police force unit. *BMJ Open*, 3(7), e002791. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2013-002791>

Jiang, D. (2020). Feeling Gratitude is Associated with Better Well-being across the Life Span: A Daily Diary Study during the COVID-19 Outbreak. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 77(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa220>

Kerry, N., Chhabra, R., & Clifton, J. D. W. (2023). Being Thankful for What You Have: A Systematic Review of Evidence for the Effect of Gratitude on Life Satisfaction. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 16, 4799–4816. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S372432>