

All work and no play will really make life dull, new research reveals

September 14 2023



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A new study across three countries led by University of Essex Department of Psychology's Dr. Paul Hanel discovered people who prioritized achievement over enjoyment were less happy on the next day.

Whereas those who aimed for freedom said they had a 13% increase in well-being, recording better sleep quality and [life satisfaction](#).

Participants who tried to relax and follow their hobbies recorded an average well-being boost of 8% and a 10% drop in stress and anxiety.

Dr. Hanel worked with colleagues at the University of Bath on the study published in the *Journal of Personality*.

For the first time, it explored how following various values impacts our happiness.

Dr. Hanel said, "We all know the old saying 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' and this study shows it might actually be true."

"There is no benefit to well-being in prioritizing achievement over fun and autonomy."

"This research shows that there are real benefits to having a balanced life and taking time to focus on enjoying ourselves and following individual goals."

"Ironically by doing this, people could in fact be more successful as they will be more relaxed, happier and satisfied."

The study "Value Fulfilment and Well-being: Clarifying Directions Over Time" examined more than 180 people in India, Turkey and the UK.

They filled in a diary across nine days and recorded how following different values affected them.

Interestingly all nationalities reported the same results with the following of 'hedonism' and 'self-direction' values leading to increased happiness.

"Achievement" and "conformity" values had no impact on happiness whatsoever.

However, the researchers believe achievement could impact on happiness when linked to [job satisfaction](#) or the number of days worked.

Professor Greg Maio, University of Bath, said, "This multinational project was an exciting foray into questions about how values affect well-being in day-to-day life."

"People often spend most of their days working hard for their daily income, studies, and careers."

"Against this backdrop, where [achievement](#)-oriented values have ring-fenced a great portion of our time, we found that it helps to value freedom and other values just enough to bring in balance and recovery."

"In the future, it will be interesting to consider how this pattern interacts with relevant traits, such as conscientiousness, and situational contexts, such as type of employment."

It is hoped the research will now influence mental health provision and therapies given to clients.

Dr. Hanel added, "Our research further shows that it might be more important to focus on increasing [happiness](#) rather than reducing anxiety and stress, which is of course also important, just not as much."

More information: Paul H. P. Hanel et al, Value fulfillment and well-being: Clarifying directions over time, *Journal of Personality* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/jopy.12869](https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12869)

Provided by University of Essex

Citation: All work and no play will really make life dull, new research reveals (2023, September 14) retrieved 13 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-play-life-dull-reveals.html>

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