

The Happiness Trap: Why the Excitement Never Lasts

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

12 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

hedonic adaptation

DEF

The tendency to become used to positive or negative changes so their emotional effect weakens.

Used in psychology; adaptation describes the fading response, not the search for the next reward.

Hedonic adaptation made the new phone feel ordinary.

Even a promotion can lose its emotional power over time.

2

the hedonic treadmill

DEF

The cycle of returning towards a familiar level of happiness and then chasing another reward.

A metaphor: like walking on a treadmill, you keep moving without reaching lasting satisfaction.

The hedonic treadmill kept him chasing the next purchase.

More success did not take her off the hedonic treadmill.

3

a sunk cost

DEF

Time, money or effort already spent and impossible to recover.

Past investment should not determine a new decision; "sunk-cost effect" names the bias.

The unused gym membership was a sunk cost.

Do not let a sunk cost control your next decision.

4

baseline

DEF

A usual or reference level to which something tends to return.

In this episode it means a familiar emotional range, not a fixed amount of happiness.

Her mood moved back towards its baseline.

We need a baseline before measuring improvement.

5

to chase

DEF

To pursue something repeatedly in the hope of obtaining it.

Often suggests restless effort; figuratively, people chase success, approval or happiness.

He kept chasing the next purchase.

She stopped chasing other people's approval.



6

fleeting

DEF

Lasting for only a very short time.

Common for moments, feelings, opportunities or impressions; slightly literary but widely useful.

The excitement was real but fleeting.

She caught a fleeting glimpse of the actor.

7

contentment

DEF

A calm feeling of satisfaction with what you have or with the present situation.

Quieter and steadier than excitement; it does not imply giving up ambition.

Contentment does not need to be bought.

He found contentment in a simple routine.

8

detachment

DEF

The ability to care without making your peace depend on a particular outcome.

Here it does not mean coldness or indifference; it means loosening emotional dependence.

Detachment helped her accept the result.

He worked hard with some detachment from the outcome.

9

impermanence

DEF

The idea or fact that things, feelings and situations do not last forever.

Central in Buddhist thought; in everyday English it highlights change and transience.

Accepting impermanence can reduce our need for control.

The season reminded her of life's impermanence.

10

peace of mind

DEF

A calm mental state without persistent worry.

A fixed collocation; say "peace of mind", not literally "peace in the mind".

Do not build your peace of mind on possessions.

Insurance gave them peace of mind.

11

to grip tightly

DEF

To hold something very firmly; figuratively, to resist letting go of an object, feeling or expectation.

The figurative use suggests fear, attachment or a strong need for control.

We grip tightly when we fear losing something.

She was gripping tightly to her original plan.



12

to walk away with something

DEF

To leave an experience having gained an idea, skill or benefit.

Here it is figurative, not physical; common in presentations, lessons and negotiations.

You will walk away with useful English.

Everyone walked away with a clearer plan.

