
Does Suffering Achieve True Happiness?

In "What Suffering Does," David Brooks explains how suffering is a necessary and useful part of life. In our culture, everyone's goal in life is to be as happy, but real joy is not possible without the risk of pain. When discussing the past, people tend to focus more on the difficult situations they encountered because that is what identities are formed through. Some people are taught how to end their pain, but it isn't necessarily a bad thing. Difficulties are what shape people and help them grow. Through suffering, people have come to realize that pain is inevitable, but it allows them to empathize with others during their times of torment since they have gone through their own ordeals. Without suffering, it becomes harder to see or understand what others are going through.

Grief and pain help people discover parts of themselves that they were initially unaware of. It's impossible to stop feeling pain or feeling grief, but people eventually learn to accept the pain and feel peaceful. There will always be an underlying current of grief, but moments of happiness can be felt simultaneously. Suffering makes people go deeper and question things. This in turn, can send them in a different direction in life because they face the suffering and respond to it in a way that resolves conflicts rather than creating more. Suffering makes people appreciate what they have and brings them true happiness.

Although happiness is seen as life's main goal, it's suffering which truly shapes people. Suffering, although painful, teaches us empathy for others going through difficult situations. Brooks' argument is convincing because it gives examples that most people can relate to and evidence to back up his claim. Brooks' opinion piece isn't against happiness. Instead, his argument is that suffering more than happiness is what shapes and defines us. Without suffering we would not feel as deeply or appreciate times of joy. Brooks argues that only seeking happiness and avoiding or ignoring difficult decisions in life should not be our ultimate goal. True happiness can only be found when each person experiences and grows through suffering. His opinion about the nature and function of suffering is very persuasive. As a person who has always struggled with anxiety, I know that pushing myself into social situations is the only way for me to grow and accomplish my goals. Many of the negative experiences in my life have shaped me into a stronger person.

If I had stayed in my comfort zone and not pushed myself into uncomfortable situations I would not have become the athlete and musician I am. The growth mindset is something many athletes believe in and is similar to Brooks' argument. The growth mindset is that a person should never stay comfortable where they are but should always push themselves into discomfort in order to grow. As an athlete I know that the best way to improve is to struggle. Through struggling I am motivated to practice and improve which makes me a better pitcher and a more satisfied player.