

3 Warning Signs Your Life is a Sitcom About Nothing

Mo Gawdat is the Chief Business Officer at Google X—the “moonshot” division of Google that is responsible for speculative projects, such as Google’s driverless cars. Devastated by the sudden and unexpected loss of his beloved teenage son, Ali, Gawdat decided to put his engineering mindset into analyzing what produces happiness.

Happiness, Gawdat writes in his new book [*Solve for Happy*](#), “is equal to, or greater than the difference between your perception of the events in your life and your expectation of how life should behave.” In other words, he explains, “Happiness is not about what the world gives you, it is what you think about what the world gives you.”

“Happiness is the absence of unhappiness,” Gawdat argues. As we become more aware of ways we are thinking ourselves into a state of unhappiness, we can disengage from these thoughts, and happiness will be left.

For happiness seekers, Gawdat’s book is a valuable read. If you are looking to be entertained while learning what produces unhappiness, then watch a rerun of *Seinfeld* and laugh along at the dysfunctional antics of the cast.

Are you starring in your own sitcom about nothing? Here are three warning signs.

1. You won’t let errors go

Notice how the Seinfeld characters incessantly repeat stories of how they've been wronged. Sometimes they even plot revenge.

Do you follow a driver who cuts you off so that you can pass them, cursing as you drive by? Do you give the cold shoulder to your partner, punishing them for a mistake they made? Do memories recur about a friend who wronged you years ago?

The antidote to holding on to the errors of other is forgiveness, and forgiveness is in short supply in the Seinfeld universe. Forgiveness in the form of *I am better than you, so I will overlook your mistakes* does not relieve unhappiness. Real forgiveness occurs when we realize that we are mistaken when we blame others for our unhappiness.

[The Arbinger Institute](#) asks us to consider this question: "Am I humbled by the remembrance of my own troubles, mistakes, and resistance or do I feel indignant at the severity of theirs." There was no spiritual growth in the Seinfeld characters. After nine seasons, the characters were still indignant at the mistakes of other. For how many "seasons" have we been indignant?

2. You are always looking for a better alternative

In Seinfeld there are a lot of *should haves* and *could haves*. Psychologist [Dr. Kelly Flanagan](#) offers this reminder: "Suffering is a mind that thinks about what it could be doing, rather than what it is doing." As Jerry is dating one woman, he is thinking about her flaws or a better woman he could be with. As George holds one job, he is thinking about a more prestigious job where even less work would be required of him.

At this moment, do we have this and want that?

Consider the proverbial half-full glass of water. Gawdat asks if we are grateful for the half-full portion and accepting of the half-empty portion, even when circumstances can't be changed? If our answer is *no*, we're not grateful or accepting, happiness will be elusive.

3. You generate a lot of thinking about minutiae

In Seinfeld, the characters often feel like victims. Everyday life, whether it is buying soup or socks, can even be hard if you are a Seinfeld character.

Endless and merciless are their commentaries and judgments about their own lives and the lives of others (including those they don't even know). When they are not processing past events and conversations they are elaborating unhappy scenarios for the future.

In all their commentaries, they are certain that their feelings are caused by others. They mistakenly believe their unhappiness is being caused by others and circumstances outside themselves. They are certain that the path to happiness is to change circumstances or associate with different people.

The next time you watch a Seinfeld rerun, notice all the ways to produce unhappiness. How many unhappy mindsets are embedded in your life? We can all learn from their follies.

To reduce stressful thinking while experiencing more energy and happiness, ask yourself this: *In this moment, where do I think my feelings are coming from?*

We know Seinfeld characters would answer the question by pointing fingers at others. The finger-pointing didn't work

for nine seasons, and it won't work for us.

As we relinquish unhappy mindsets, the more space we make for our life to be about something, and happiness ensues.