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Ask yourself 4 questions to figure out if you're successful

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Your answers will reveal a lot.

The more complicated life becomes, the harder it is to define success (<http://www.businessinsider.com/how-successful-people-define-success-2017-3>).

As in: You're crushing it at work, earning one promotion after another, but you've barely seen your kids in weeks, and honestly, you don't feel so great about yourself.

And on the flip side: You stay at home with your kids every day, watching them blossom into happy, healthy little people, but your entrepreneurial potential is being left untapped, and you don't really feel fulfilled, either.

Whether you're dealing with one of the above quandaries or something else, there's a more realistic framework for evaluating your life choices than simply "I am/am not successful."

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That framework was highlighted in the new book, “Barking Up the Wrong Tree (https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01KT104RI/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1),” by Eric Barker, who runs a popular blog (<http://www.bakadesuyo.com/>) by the same name. It was originally developed by researchers Laura Nash and Howard Stevenson, who worked together at Harvard.

As they wrote in a 2004 Harvard Business Review article (<https://hbr.org/2004/02/success-that-lasts>), Nash and Stevenson studied hundreds of high achievers in different domains. The researchers found that there are four “irreducible components of enduring success”: happiness, achievement, significance, and legacy.

When he visited the Business Insider office in May, Barker explained how four questions can help you use this framework to evaluate your life:

- **Happiness:** “Am I enjoying what I’m doing?”
- **Achievement:** “Am I doing well and getting ahead in my career?”
- **Significance:** “Is what I’m doing having positive effects on the people I love?”
- **Legacy:** “Is what I’m doing making the world a better place?”

“When people deposited a little bit in each one of those buckets on a weekly or monthly basis, they ended up finding a good approximation of work-life balance,” Barker said.

Happiness and achievement

One way to hit the first two metrics pretty easily, Barker said, is to find a career where you’re using your “signature strengths,” or the skills that you’re particularly good at.

Research suggests that “the more often you use those skills, the more you’re happier, you’re respected, you feel good about your job.” What’s more, “if you’re using those skills in your job, you’re going to achieve more,” Barker said.

Significance

In terms of the third metric, significance, you’ll want to get a sense of whether your work affords you enough time *and* money to support your family and the people you love.

Legacy

Finally, when it comes to the fourth metric, legacy, you’ll want to honestly consider whether the work you’re doing is positively benefitting society and the world at large.

Too many people, Barker said, make the mistake of using a “collapsing” metric — evaluating their life according to *just* happiness or *just* money, for example.

Other people make the mistake of “sequencing” — trying to focus first on education, then on their career, then on their relationships, for example. “Life is never that clear-cut,” Barker said.

No one’s saying that hitting all four metrics all the time will be easy. But it’s important to take the time to figure out what will make you personally fulfilled. If you start out with the *intention* to incorporate all four elements into your work and life in general, you’ll at least have a better chance of feeling successful.

NOW WATCH: A psychologist explains why self-esteem is a sham and can get in the way of your success (<http://www.businessinsider.com/tasha-eurich-insight-self-esteem-sham-acceptance-2017-5>)

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