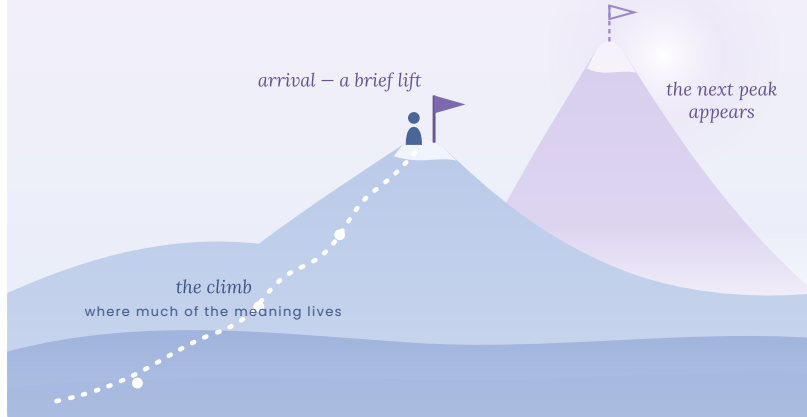


The Arrival Fallacy

WHY REACHING THE GOAL ISN'T ALWAYS ENOUGH

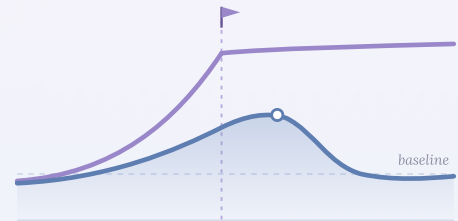
The belief that reaching a goal will bring lasting happiness or a stable sense of "enough" — a term popularised by Dr Tal Ben-Shahar in *Happier* (2007). Many reach a long-awaited milestone and feel flatter than expected — "I should be happy, but I'm not." It's especially common in high achievers, perfectionists and anyone whose worth feels tied to outcomes.

THE SUMMIT ILLUSION



EXPECTATION VS REALITY

How happiness tends to move



— What we expect — it stays high
— What often happens — a lift, then return

Illustrative pattern, not data

Three Moments of a Goal

Anticipation, arrival and adaptation

ANTICIPATION

01

The Climb

We imagine how good it will feel. Pursuing a meaningful goal can itself bring energy, focus and purpose.

"Once I get there, I'll be happy."



ARRIVAL

02

The Summit

A lift of pride or relief — often shorter and smaller than we predicted, and sometimes surprisingly flat.

"Is this it?"



ADAPTATION

03

The New Normal

The achievement becomes ordinary, mood returns toward baseline, and attention shifts to the next peak.

"What's next?"

The Science Behind It

Why arrival often feels different from anticipation

HEDONIC ADAPTATION

We Get Used to Things

We adjust to new circumstances, so reactions to good (and bad) changes tend to fade.

Sometimes called the "hedonic treadmill"

THE IMPACT BIAS

We Overestimate the Feeling

We often overestimate how strong and lasting our reactions to future events will be.

Academics overestimated how long tenure would lift mood

WANTING VS LIKING

Anticipation Is Its Own Reward

Reward systems respond strongly to wanting and pursuing — which can feel different from having arrived.

Much of the enjoyment lives in the pursuit itself

Ways to Work With It

Enjoying the journey, not only the destination



Savour the progress

Notice and enjoy steps along the way, not only the finish line.



Expect a lift, not a transformation

Hold realistic hopes for what any single milestone can do.



Pause before moving on

Take time to register and mark an achievement.



Link goals to values

Choose goals connected to meaning, not only outcomes or status.



Invest in connection

Relationships and shared experiences tend to sustain wellbeing.



Separate worth from results

You are more than your achievements — worth isn't earned.

Happiness is found less at the summit, and more in the experience of climbing toward it.

A CENTRAL IDEA IN TAL BEN-SHAHAR'S *Happier* (PARAPHRASED)

01

WHAT GOAL HAVE I REACHED THAT FELT LESS SATISFYING THAN EXPECTED?

02

WHAT AM I PURSUING NOW, EXPECTING IT TO "FINALLY" MAKE ME HAPPY?

03

WHAT IS ONE WAY I COULD ENJOY THE PROCESS MORE, STARTING NOW?

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