

PHOTOGRAPHY THERAPY 2

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To conquer and overcome the shitty feelings you might have in life, photography is one of the ultimate solutions.

Of course, just making photos won't fix your problems in life. But, it will certainly help.

1. Adventure awaits!

To me, photography makes me more adventurous. I don't want to just stay in my apartment. I want to explore, see the world, and do more adventurous and epic stuff.

Consider — would you watch lord of the rings if Bilbo Baggins just stayed inside his little hut? No. You want adventure! The same goes with all the fun stories we read — we love reading adventurous stories.

Yet, in modern life — it kind of sucks, because we no longer have opportunities to have more adventures in life.

Theory 1: a lot of modern depression happens because we lack adventure, novelty, danger, or challenge in life.

Photography is a thrill. To me, shooting street photography is one of the most challenging and scariest things I do. I risk getting yelled at, hit, punched, whatever. Yet— the risk of street photography is precisely what makes it fun

Consider, people who go rock climbing — the risk is what helps people focus, and enjoy the experience. One of the theories of “flow psychology” is that we need an element of failure or danger, in order to achieve our personal fullest.

Even when I'm at the gym, I'm afraid of “failing” — like when I'm doing heavy squats or deadlifts. I don't want to fail, so I muster up extra courage and strength to succeed.

Photo adventures:

- Jump in your car, and visit the next city, randomly walk on the streets, and make photos.
- Contact a photographer whose work you like via email, and ask them to meet up, and go on a photo walk and shoot together.
- Travel to a foreign city, and wander the streets WITHOUT your smartphone and GPS. Let randomness and novelty lead you.
- Ask strangers to make a portrait of them.

2. Photography as artistic self expression

Okay, whoever says that photography isn't art, tell them to shut the front door.

Photography is art.

Art is most useful when it helps us express ourselves. Dancers express themselves through the movements of their body. Painters express themselves through the colors and pastels they use. Photographer express themselves through the subjects they photograph.

Theory 2: many of us get depressed, when we don't feel we have the opportunity to express how we really feel.

Photography is self expression. If you don't have the opportunity to express your true self — of course you're going to feel depressed.

Assignment ideas:

- For a month, don't upload any photos you take online. Ask yourself, "Are the photos I'm making bringing myself joy? Or do I just make photos to please others?"
- Print your favorite photos as small 4x6 prints, and hang them at home on a cork board, or just with double sided sticky tape on the wall. Make your own photo collage at home, to bring yourself joy.
- Start your own photography blog, disable comments, stats, and likes — and

- only upload photos that you like, whenever you want, and however much you like to.
- Start a self portrait series. Shoot one selfie of yourself everyday, to better understand your own self image.

3. Finding joy in the ordinary, beautiful in the mundane

The best photos aren't the photos we take while traveling in exotic places. No – the best photos are of our everyday lives.

To me, **whenever I photograph my everyday life, I feel more appreciation and joy of my everyday life.**

For example, I'll photograph my loved ones. I'll photograph Cindy – as a reminder,

I'm so grateful to have Cindy in my life.

I will photograph my food, because it reminds me: "Thank god for this amazing food, and I'm not starving to death".

I will photograph myself, because it reminds myself of my own mortality. Memento mori photography.

Theory 3: we fall into the trap of fantasy – we think we will only be happy once we travel, become millionaires, or achieve "financial freedom". We lose track of finding appreciation in the joy of everyday life.

Therefore, use photography as a tool to find joy in your everyday life. Just shoot with your phone or a simple point and shoot camera.

Photography therapy – finding joy in everyday life, that it is all so beautiful! :)

Assignment 3: everyday joy

Assignment: photograph one thing everyday that brings you joy in life.

For example, photograph your coffee cup, your loved ones, yourself, your favorite books, or anything that makes you smile.

Conclusion

To me, the only way to find true joy in life is to find appreciation in the small things of everyday life, to have strong relationships with our loved ones, to do meaningful work, to be creative every day, to constantly grow, explore, be curious, and to stay physically and mentally strong.

For myself, studying Stoicism and Zen philosophy put me on the right path. Now, I'm starting to realize that photography is the ultimate democratic form of art — and the duty of my life is to inform others, the true power of photography. And yes, that everyone is a photographer.

STAY STRONG, ERIC

PHILOSOPHY >