

# How's Your Life?



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Over the last several decades I have been fond of asking people “*How’s your life on a scale of 1 to 10?*” Everyone is prepared to answer this question either immediately or within 5 seconds, and nobody ever says 1 or 4. Perhaps this is because once you go negative (below the median) you have to make some sort of statement, and 4 doesn’t really cut it whereas 1 is overly dramatic. In any case I have found a normal distribution of ratings => 5 for those who portray themselves as positive, even including 10. It is surprising and illuminating that people are so ready to provide a numerical rating of their life at such a summary level, even while they are equally ready to describe their own personal *Living la Vida Loca* rollercoaster!

If the determination of the temperature of the universe were made a national priority for some reason, then a violent debate would ensue among physicists, chemists, astronomers, mathematicians, and philosophers about what that number might mean. The astronomers and mathematicians might protest that simultaneous measurement of anything over cosmic distance is meaningless due to relativity effects; and then offer a variety of theoretical temperatures anyhow. The physicists and chemists would emphasize that you should be more specific. The philosophers would support and contradict everyone.

I would agree with them all, as I emphasize to my clients regularly. Your summary of how your life is going is important because it elevates your perspective and it influences your mood, but you actually live your life along many parallel tracks that timeshare your 24 hour day. It is instructive to see how one of these tracks can dominate people’s summary rating of their lives, even when that track only accounts for a tiny percentage of their time. It is instructive to isolate the most significant tracks in your life and to evaluate them independently. In this way it is possible to take an executive perspective on the quality of your life and to manipulate it. Call me.

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