

How to “Romanticize Your Life”

A trend that took off early in the pandemic encourages people to appreciate life’s simple pleasures, a philosophy that resonates just as strongly two years later.

The following is excerpted from the article “The Mundane Thrill of Romanticizing Your Life” by Christina Caron, columnist for The New York Times, May 11, 2022.

For the last two years, the phrase “romanticize your life” has emerged on social media as a call to action. It asks us to appreciate what we have right in front of us and to live with intention, a reminder to look for moments of beauty and embrace minimalism.



Credit...Moritz Wienert

Although some of the content appears aspirational — not all of us can afford a quick trip to Italy or run off to a field full of flowers, dressed in flouncy spring fashion — most of it rejects the type of messaging that pushes people to acquire material things. And it likewise renounces the “that girl” aesthetic that promotes a one-size-fits-all path to well-being, replete with green juices, journaling and working out.

One Reddit commenter wrote: “I buy celebratory paper plates from the dollar store and use them when I feel like being festive. They have all different holidays, mermaids, robots, weddings, ‘It’s a boy.’ I go ham.”

Experts say the romanticizing trend may have endured in part because it is a new way of exploring [mindfulness](#) — the practice of paying attention to the present moment and becoming aware of your physical sensations, thoughts and emotions in a nonjudgmental way. It also offers a sense of agency, a feeling of control that has been sorely lacking as the pandemic grinds on.

“It’s being positive about the things that life has to offer, regardless of whether the circumstance is what you imagined or wanted,” said Ashley Ward, 26, whose 2020 [TikTok video](#) about romanticizing has been viewed more than three million times. “You can’t control everything in your life, but you do have control of how you view your situation.”

The trend draws wisdom from different domains, like mindfulness, positive psychology and the Danish custom of [hygge](#), but “it’s being presented in a way that’s engaging and keeps it fresh,” said Eric B. Loucks, an associate professor of epidemiology, behavioral and social sciences, and medicine at Brown University and the director of the school’s Mindfulness Center.

Dr. Loucks’s [research](#) and his new book, “The Mindful College Student,” illustrate how mindfulness can decrease stress and symptoms of depression, and improve sleep quality and physical activity levels. “Romanticizing your life” intersects with mindfulness, he added, in part by helping us become more in tune with ourselves.

In Ms. Ward’s TikTok video, the camera is positioned high above, peering down at the beach where she reclines on a towel. The overhead shot conveys that she is the main character, and the simplicity of the imagery allows her earnest voice-over to take center stage.

“You have to start romanticizing your life,” the narration begins. “You have to start thinking of yourself as the main character. Because if you don’t, life will continue to pass you by. And all the little things that make it so beautiful will continue to go unnoticed. So take a second, and look around, and realize that it’s a blessing for you to be here right now.”

Livia Boerger, a mental well-being coach in London, has [written](#) about the various ways people can begin to [romanticize their lives](#) and has a 28-day challenge on her website, to “help you celebrate living for the smaller reasons and fall in love with life again.”

During the pandemic, she said, a lot of people have been “looking for ways to create joy and find that happiness internally, and make the most of what they had.”

It may also lead to a larger question: What truly brings us happiness? Is it that expensive vacation or that new piece of clothing? Or should we stop waiting for that picture-perfect moment and start enjoying the present?