

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

Arpita: Hi everybody. Welcome to Doctors Living Deliberately. I am Dr. Arpita Gupta DePalma and I am here today with my co-host Dr. Michael Hersh. We are going to give you a treat today. I don't know if you've noticed, you probably have noticed, but what we've been trying to do is in between every couple episodes, give you some teaching nuggets, some little gold pieces of wisdom about what we've learned on our journeys with coaching for ourselves as well as for the colleagues and clients that we work with. And so today I am super excited because it's one of those episodes where we get to talk to us about some of the things that we love to share with our clients.

So Dr. Michael Hersh today is going to talk a little bit about arrival fallacy. Arrival fallacy, he's gonna jump into defining and giving you all the details. And I will say for myself, when we are in school, when we have been taught about what we wanna create for ourselves in our lives, we have that ingrained in us from childhood honestly. When, when we're little about what you want to be, you wanna be a successful doctor, you wanna have that white picket fence, you wanna have the house and the kids and the dog, and all the stuff. And so we have these ideas in our brain of what happiness is gonna look like, and that's what we strive for. And when it doesn't exactly look like that until we get there, we're not happy. And so, I am going to bounce this over to Dr. Hersh to talk about arrival fallacy and what it is and why it's so important to talk about and bring to light with physicians, because I think a lot of us really deal with this and suffer with it. So, Dr. Michael Hersh please engage us, tell us all the things.

Michael: Absolutely. Yeah. It's, you know, it's interesting and true and arrival fallacy isn't even a term I was aware of before finding coaching. And so for anybody that is not familiar with the term, an arrival fallacy is the belief that I will be happy when dot, dot, dot fill in the blank. Right? And Doctors, this is our entire life, right? So if you can think back to when you were in college and the thought was, I just need to get into medical school and then I will be happy, and then the carrot gets dangled in front of you. I just need to do well in medical school and get the residency that I want and then I will be happy and then my life will be set. And then you get to residency and, oh, it's just that one fellowship. If I can get that fellowship, then my life is made, and then I just need the right attending job. I need to pick the right job, and once I get the perfect job, I can be happy.

And I wanna ask the listeners, did any of that work out as you had planned? Did you ever get to the next level and think I finally made it? My life is perfect. If you're anything like me, the answer is for sure not, because every time you achieve that goal, you immediately create the next goal and you hang your happiness on that next goal. And that is what an arrival fallacy is. And oh my goodness, if my entire life was not built on arrival fallacies one right after the other. Did, did you know about any of this Arpita?

Arpita: You know, I, I really did not, because it becomes such a rat race of life. We just move on to the next thing, right? We set our goals for something, we either achieve it or we don't, and then we just move on. We don't take the time to celebrate the wins as they come because we've had this delayed gratification from training. That's what's ingrained in us, that you don't have time to sleep,

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

pee, eat. We've talked about that, but also just celebrate what's, what's good, what we have achieved, and that I think perpetuates this cycle that we've created for ourselves.

You know, I think you have explained very simply what it typically looks like for most physicians. Like, when I get this, then I will be happy, and it moves along the stages of training. For when clients have then completed training, let's say they're as attendings and they're coming to you, what does it look like now after the fact? Like what do you see in terms of the arrival fallacies that are present with your current clients?

Michael: Absolutely. I would say, you know, for me, as I was starting with coaching, I was fully ingrained in the financial independence, retirement early community, and so my arrival fallacy turned from achieving the next thing in, you know, my medical education, the next level to what can I achieve in my life, right? So I will be happy when I reach financial independence. I will be happy when I have the house of my dreams. I, you know, see the people, you know, the other physicians in the doctor's lounge talking about their lake house or their vacation home. And so the arrival fallacy, it never goes away, but it absolutely can shift. And so I have termed this, the race to an imaginary finish line, right? So you are creating this finish line in your mind that is, is not a true finish line, right? The goalpost keeps moving, and so you never actually get to this place that you want to go, but you get so wrapped up in trying to get there that you lose perspective on all the things that actually are going really well in your life.

Arpita: Yeah, totally. And I see that happening, like you said, it's this imaginary finish line that keeps shifting because we never just stay present in the moment and enjoy the wins. And it's interesting also that you said that we hear about all these you know, real estate investment deals and like starting your own businesses, et cetera, et cetera, all these different things. And I think it goes back to what truly brings you joy? What do you want? Right? We don't want to just do it because the next person is doing it or because that's what is supposedly going to give me that happiness at the end. So what truly matters the most to you, I think is important. An important reflection most people need to do. How do you start to combat this then? Like now we've recognized that this is an issue that a lot of people don't even have awareness around having, but once you've helped your clients kind of recognize that, what do you do with them then? What's next?

Michael: Yeah, so one of the, the quotes that I have found that I really love is just, there is not better than here, right? So we spend so much time focusing on the next thing. We completely lose sight of all the things that we have. Right? So I mentioned for you personally that I was so focused on financial independence and early retirement. Right? And I had completely lost sight of all of the amazing things that I had created for myself in the 10 years after, you know, becoming an attending and completing my fellowship. I was living in a fantastic neighborhood in a house that I could only have dreamt of when I was in college or medical school with my wife and my kids. And it was everything that if you had asked me in college or medical school, like, what do you want your doctor life to look like? Like this was it. Yet I had completely lost the perspective and I was now focused on like, well, how do I escape this life? Right? Like, how do I, how do I get myself to a point where I

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

don't have to go to work anymore? And man, does that just kind of destroy all the joy? It is a complete and total joy vacuum, and you just get so lost in the rat race, in trying to get there that you lose focus on all of the great stuff you've created for yourself.

Arpita: Yeah, I was, I was interjecting, I got like excited for a minute because you mentioned like your wife and kids and I was like, you better mention your wife and kids, right because that like, that's so important. Like having the joy of being able to find that person for you and, and have kids. That's a huge part of it. Right? And a lot of times we don't even recognize that we are lucky to have that too, but,

Michael: And I will say that the arrival fallacy takes you away from recognizing that, right? So you know, when you spend so much time, when I was spending so much time focused on financial independence, I was working more, I was burning out faster. I was spending less time with my wife and my children. And when I take you back to what I wanted in my life, all I wanted was, you know, the home with my wife and my children, and I had completely lost sight of that because I had refocused on the next goal. And so remembering that there is not better than here, and taking a moment to really have some gratitude for the things that you've created in your life. Man is that kind of, for me, the biggest antidote to the arrival fallacy.

Arpita: Totally. Totally. And it, you know, and it's not to say that it's always perfect, like we'll have dips where we go back and forth. You know, we've, I think we both have experienced that, but the point is being able to then even just recognize that and coming out of that to say, all right, you know, it's been a rough couple of weeks. Let me refocus what is important here, and how can I get back to what my true values and goals and desires are that truly will, do bring me joy. So I, you know, I, I think part of that is also recognizing that where we are on our path is kind of where we're supposed to be, right? And a lot of times we spend our time comparing ourselves to what other people have or where other people are, or what other people are doing. And that is really, a thief of joy. Comparisonitis is a thief of joy, right? That's one of the quotes that we toss out there a lot, and that I think is hard for people to recognize because we are in such a competitive field, competitive industry or career path, recognizing not only just with other physicians, but even just keeping up with the Joneses that still kind of exists. Can you talk a little bit about that and how you kind of tackle that from a mindset perspective.

Michael: Yeah. So, you know, I know not everybody utilizes social media, but you know, I have been in a lot of social media physician groups where you get to see people talking about all the things that they're doing and how they are financially independent at 35 with like 15 million and, and you know, multiple cash flowing real estate properties and a business that they've built, and you're like, oh, wow. You know, I get in my car and I commute to the suburbs every day, you know? And so it's so easy to, to look at what other people are doing and then to make that a reflection on yourself. Like, man, what did I do wrong? I've wasted all of this time. Why wasn't I doing these other things to create this stuff for myself? And taking a moment to recognize that that's what you're doing is huge. And also remembering as you were just saying, you're exactly where you're supposed to be and you

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

don't wanna compare your beginning or middle to somebody else's end because if you spend all your time focused on somebody else's end, You never get outta first gear, right? You just are so focused on everybody else that you never spend any time to imagine for yourself like, where could I go? Like, what if I started right now? And so the key is to stop comparing yourself and to really figure out like, what do I want for myself and how do I make that a reality?

Arpita: Right, and I'll add to that. I'll offer that you mentioned social media, what you see, even if it's not social media, even if it's the neighbors across the street, what you see is not necessarily what's truly there. Right? And so it's going to be crappy. You're not getting the whole story. And so starting to have that awareness around, yeah, it all looks like it's amazing rainbows and daisies and perfect, but I pretty much guarantee you there's 50% shit that's there too. And you're not seeing that. Nobody posts that. I think people are now are becoming a little bit more comfortable posting the negatives and the downsides of what has happening in life along their journey. But the point is, you don't wanna sit there comparing 'em to their end win. You don't, A, know if it's true, and B, that might not be what is in alignment with what you want in the first place for yourself. And that's truly what matters the most, I think.

And I think that's like going into the next point here of just what are our goals? Like what do you truly want for yourself? How do you develop these endpoints that you've created for what's authentic and true to you? How do you work with your clients with regards to that? Like developing their plan for what they wanna do and maybe blocking out or busting out some of these beliefs that they have that are holding 'em back from doing so?

Michael: Yeah. So I'm gonna answer your question with a question. So if you were getting on a plane, you were just at, you know, just at the door and you were getting on the plane and you were walking past the cockpit and you heard the pilot say, I know we're supposed to go to San Francisco today, but I'm not really sure how to get there. But I'm sure we'll figure it out along the way. Would you get on that plane?

Arpita: Sure! No.

Michael: You would probably think twice before taking your seat on that plane. Yet this is how most of us live our lives every single day, right? So we just are like, I'm not really sure what I want in my life, but I'll, I'll figure it out. Like as I go through my life, as I go through the motions, I'm gonna figure out what I want. And the key here is that we need purpose-driven goals to create the life and the fulfillment in our lives that we all want. And so if you know that your pilot has a flight plan to get you to San Francisco, but there's some turbulence along the way, and then he or she decides, you know what? We're still headed to San Francisco, but I'm gonna take a little bit of a detour around the turbulence so that we ultimately end up in San Francisco. You would be a lot more likely to get on that plane. Or maybe landing in San Francisco, there's too much fog and so they're gonna have to detour and you're gonna land in LA and that's the safest thing to do, right?

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

This is how we get to choose how to live our life, is to create a goal and then to do everything we can to get to that goal. And if somewhere along the way our goal changes, then we just change our flight pattern, right? We can create something that we are headed to aiming for and headed towards, and then decide that we don't want that thing anymore and pivot and do something else. But when you create the goal, you create purpose in your life, you create fulfillment, and you create joy because you're actually following the plan that you want in your life.

Arpita: Yeah, the, the only thing I'll add to that is just being careful with changing the goals too quickly, right? We're gonna set our goals like a hundred percent you decide, and constraining is also important here. Constraining for great, right? Pick one goal and set that goal and have your deadline for it and don't shift gears to go to something else before you've tried for at least six months or whatever the date is that you've set. Because again, when it gets tough, our brain's tendencies is to wanna like stop or give up or do something else that might be easier. So just being onto yourself when that's showing up. But yes, a hundred percent these purpose driven goals are what are going to get us where we wanna be, and we have to stick to it. And have an awareness around what is the adversity quotient per se. That's what I referenced it to, is how much we're gonna take on. We don't have to do these things, right? We are choosing to do them. So what level of adversity am I willing to take on? They're optional, but I'm gonna do it because I know ultimately it's gonna get me to where I wanna be. What's your quotient there? How much are you willing to do? And then even when it gets rough, sticking with it is key I think.

Michael: Yeah I think that this is for me, where coaching has had the greatest impact because your brain, so the reason I was saying create a goal and you can change is because when I'm coaching other physicians, a lot of times they're like, well, I'm, I'm afraid to make this goal because what if, what if I change my mind? Right? And so I always encourage people, just create the goal. You can change your mind later, but you're a hundred percent right. You wanna stick with the goal. Right? If you create something for yourself, you want to be doing everything you can. And so this is where coaching for me has been so, so impactful because when your brain starts telling you that the goal that you've created is too hard or you don't know how to do it, your coach can kind of enter the picture and question, is that even true? Do you really not know how to get to this place that you know that you wanted to get to?

Arpita: Yeah. Is your brain kind of being the jerk here trying to hold you back? Right. And that's the beauty of it, like you said with the coaching. So so, and I think, you know, also, just to circle back to this, is that recognizing that it's not gonna be awesome along the way, and we, we touched on it, but like, when you kind of wanna give up, it's gonna suck half the time while we're trying to get there and it's gonna suck when we get there. Right? Can you talk a little bit about that? How do you explain that to us? And because ultimately I think that's when we finally get to relax, that's when we can recognize that.

Michael: Yeah, so I think there's a couple of key points here. Dan Sullivan has a fantastic book called *The Gap and the Gain*, and sometimes when we are creating goals, we focus on the goal, right?

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

We focus on the end point, and when we create a big goal for ourselves, all we can see is how far away that goal is and how much work we have to do to get there. And the key here is rather focusing on the gain, on the incremental changes that you are making, on the incremental progress that you are seeing as you make your way towards that big goal that you've created for yourself. And so enjoy the journey, right? Take a look at the progress. I actually keep a document where month to month I write down like what did I do well? What went well for me and what did I learn over the last month? So when I go back and I'm like, Ugh, you know, I, I'm no further ahead than I was. I have this very specific document written by me where I can look back and be like, oh yeah, I forgot about all that stuff. Because that's what brains do. Our brains are immediately going to forget about all the good stuff, and they're gonna focus on the one thing that didn't go as planned. And instead, I have written down for myself, oh no, you need to be focusing on all the gains that you've made. And you know, I have a little reminder that tells me once a month to go back and to fill in the document so that when I'm not feeling so great about my goal, I can go back and be like, oh look at all these achievements. And then just recognizing that not everything is gonna go well, right? Life is 50/50, right? 50% of the time we're gonna be living our life and things are gonna be going great, and the other 50% of the time not so much. And you need the times that things are not going well, so that you can enjoy the times when things are.

Arpita: Yes, a hundred percent. I think that was such an eye-opening concept for me to recognize that we're always striving for it to be happy and better and good. And so when we do that, we are not actually relaxing and are getting ourselves in a situation or at a place where we can kind of just settle in when we can just accept that, yeah, it's going to not be great half of the time because that's what creates the good times. Then we can just kind of set back and just see and go through life as it's supposed to be. And I think another piece of it is just again, having that knowing of what you want, being true and authentic to yourself is key here. And, and we kind of put it throughout the episode, but making sure that you're doing those check-ins, what do I really want for myself? What do I know to be true for me? And then working towards that and staying authentic to what your why is I think is very important. That will drive you for everything you do, and so that you can show up in a way that's intentional and authentic and just who you are. So, yeah.

Michael: That is the key to the purpose-driven goal is having a why. Because as you are making your way towards your goals, it's gonna be uncomfortable, right? If you already knew how to have the thing that you wanted, you'd already have it, right? And so there is so much learning in the process, and you're going to have moments where you question. Do I really want this? How badly do I want this? And it is the strength of your why, of why you're doing the thing in the first place that will determine whether or not you ever achieve your goal. Because if your why is not incredibly strong, if you are not very clear on the reason that you want the thing, the moment things get tough is when it's gonna be so easy to just say, I don't wanna do this anymore. I just want to go back to the way that my life was. You cut yourself short when you do that right? You don't get the thing that you actually really want it. You never make it to San Francisco. Yeah.

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh

Arpita: Yeah. I think that's the, that's the key there. It's just keeping your why. Keeping it short and succinct too. Maybe putting it on post-it notes around wherever your work stations are, wherever you find yourself. I have things on my bathroom mirror in the morning, that's my reminder for why I'm doing things, and that's what energizes me and charges me, even when I'm feeling a little bit down. Okay, that's why it's there. And today kind of sucks a little bit, but that's my why and I'm gonna remind myself of that. So I think that's super important. Well, Dr. Michael Hersh, I think this has been, a wonderful, wonderful nugget today that you've offered to our audience. Tell us a little bit about what you offer with regards to your programs and how you work with clients with regards to tackling arrival fallacy and creating purpose-driven goals.

Michael: Yeah, so I, you know, I think that this is a big topic that comes up in a lot of the coaching for physicians. And so we do in a lot of the one-to-one sessions with my clients, spend a decent amount of time talking about this particular topic of the arrival fallacy. You know, on my website I do have kind of a, a free video that specifically goes into the details of, of some of the stuff that we were just talking about. And so, you know, for any of the listeners that are interested in more information specifically about this you can go to my website [better physician life.com](http://betterphysicianlife.com). And there is not only a video that that kind of tackles this topic, but there's also this worksheet that helps physicians figure out like, what do you want your life to look like. Like how do you create those purpose-driven goals? Most of us don't really take any time to sit down and figure out what do we want our life to look like in 5, 10, 20 years? And so I have a worksheet that helps take you through this process so that you can figure it out for yourself.

Because what I want my life to look in 20 years may not look the same as what you want, Arpita or what our listeners want. And so sitting down and creating the life that you want intentionally right now is gonna help you to direct kind of the choices moving forward that you make towards achieving your goals. And then, you know, so I, I offer one-to-one coaching for physicians where we can tackle these issues directly one-to-one, and help you to really figure out what are your goals and how do we get you there.

Arpita: Wonderful. That's awesome. I know we've both benefited from that and, and I know you've had clients really have a lot of successes with working with you with that, so, well thanks Dr. Michael Hersh for talking to us today. Again, if you're interested in learning more about his programs than what he has to offer, it's [www. Better physician life.com](http://www.betterphysicianlife.com) and feel free to check it out and all that information will be in the show notes as well today if you guys wanna reach out to him. All right. Well, so good speaking with you. Take care, Dr. Hersh.

Michael: Thank you so much. You have a great day. Take care.

Arpita: All right, bye.

Michael: Bye.

16. I'll Be Happy When - with Dr. Michael Hersh