"Why focus on happiness when goals are more influential." After reading through the 9 articles that we have had so far, I think the most important take away is that happiness is not something you aim for in life. Instead you have to go through life with goals and needs set so that you can progress through your ups and downs of happiness. Then when looking back on your life so far you will not just see those times that you have been sad or unhappy but instead you will see everything that has been accomplished. This idea is brought up in both Emily Esfahani Smith's TED talk 'The Power of Meaning' and in Avram Alperts article 'The Good-Enough Life'. Both these authors state that happiness has been molded into this false idea of something that can be seen or achieved, when instead happiness is a secondary characteristic of meaningfulness of one’s life.

This topic is also brought up in Robert Waldinger's TED talk 'What makes a good life' were a 75-year study showed that personal relationships were a large factor in the achievement in happiness or rather meaningfulness. Robert Waldinger on the TED stage talks about his paper 'What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness', which claims that personal relationships improve life. Waldinger supports his claims by comparing the many different men in a 75-year study which recorded the ins and outs of their lives from 15years old to the present. The purpose of the talk is to show the lasting effects that personal relationships have on the human life, and what signified happiness to a person. After explaining the study and how data was collected Waldinger goes through the many pieces of evidence that shows that the participants that had good relationships had a happier life. Now this TED talk outlines something that I think is very important to remember; happiness in the studies definition was determined by the participants. Whether or not they were talking about happiness or meaningfulness is up for debate.

One key piece of evidence that makes meaningfulness a better data point of the study is outlined in Emily Esfahani Smith's TED talk 'The Power of Meaning'. Where she talked about how there is more to life than being happy, and that the pursuit of happiness almost always ends in the opposite. She suggested that happiness is the unachievable fantasy that we often aim for, when in reality it is better to focus on the meaning of your life. In her talk she gives an example of her father who instead of focusing on the day to day happiness levels decided to apply a longer goal. Causing him to have a purpose in life and apply meaning to his life. These points made by Smith made me think that people focus only on happiness because they do not know any other way. The possibility that they have never been exposed to applying meaning to their lives or achieving goals could be causing this focus on unachievable happiness. This same point is brought up in Avram Alpert article 'The Good-Enough Life' where he discusses how seeing other greatness can cause them to have their own desire to be great. Instead of looking for the meaning in their own lives they focus on greatness which can be an obstacle to their potential.

Alpert suggests in his article that a pre-defined life is one that will always be filled with disappointment, instead of defining it you should evolve with life to decide that is "great" and what is just okay. He supports his claims by reviewing several points of view from great thinkers where often the result of greatness is the failure to achieve it and instead forgetting about pre-determined ideas of accomplishment is the best way to live a "good enough life". Alpert proposes this idea in order to separate people from thinking that certain ideas are great and that greatness in a whole is so fluid that you can aim for it in life achievement. This idea transitions to the question of what good enough is for some people. When thinking about yourself instead of others you need to determine what personal wellbeing is for you.

Pilar Sanjuan, a research professor that focuses on emotion regulation, talks about this in his paper entitled “Affect Balance as Mediating Variable Between Effective Psychological Functioning and Satisfaction with Life”. Where he gives sound evidence about 'well-being' and what causes that well-being. Using Psychological background about well-being along with a study that included over 100 participants. The most important part of the study showed that balance in life mediated the relationships between some positive life attitudes and satisfaction with life. Therefore, reinforcing the idea that having overall meaning in life negates the negative effects of once in a while disappointment. This is a slightly different approach then the other articles to find out what the true definitions are of wellbeing, and happiness which can be inferred from this data.

After multiple examples constant focus on happiness is not the way to achieve a good life. Instead applying meaning to your life through goals, and personal relationships allows you to achieve more and have a better life. This point is made through most of the authors and also supported by Pilar Sanjuan's study of wellbeing which gives a good reference point to what it represents in our lives.