Non-attachment and Personal Striving Success: The Influence of Non-attachment on Personal

Striving Characteristics

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

Non-attachment is a cognitive style in which an individual releases their mental fixations, or 'attachments', to acquiring wanted outcomes and desires. As such, it appears to be psychologically advantageous. The present study examined the relationship between levels of non-attachment and personal striving progress, and other striving characteristics. Participants were administered a survey comprising of a Personal Strivings Measure and the Nonattachment Scale. Participants answered only part of the questionnaires, as the study used a planned missing data design incorporating a multiple imputation procedure. Analyses revealed a moderate correlation between striving progress and non-attachment. Non-attached individuals were also more likely to engage in authentic strivings, had more personally important strivings and were less likely to engage in externally controlled strivings. Non-attachment appears to have a positive impact on personal striving progress, but also on healthy psychological functioning. It therefore warrants further research into future use in psychological practice and patient education.

Non-attachment and successful personal striving

It is a common conception that non-attachment will include such tenets as becoming detached from life, being disconnected and indifferent, or abandoning pursuits of achievement and joy. Contrary to this, the informed interpretation of non-attachment means something altogether different. Non-attached individuals are those who can let go of their 'attachments' to positive states and outcomes. This thesis will investigate the seemingly paradoxical theory that non-attached people will be more successful in their personal strivings, and examine links between different aspects of striving and non-attachment.

Non-attachment

Attachment as a concept within psychology is usually typified by attachment theory, associated with the types and patterns of personal relationships and dynamics formed between people, and caregivers. Within attachment theory lies the forms of secure, ambivalent, disorganised and avoidant patterns of caregiver-child relationships, with secure attachment providing the best attachment bonds and well-being (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). There has been a rise in interest in the integration of Buddhist concepts and theory into Western psychology (de Silva, 1986; Mikulas, 2007; Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). In Eastern philosophy, attachment as a concept does not continue in the same vein. Prominent within Buddhist philosophy is the concept of non-attachment.

Non-attachment within Buddhist philosophy is not solely about the Western concepts of relationships, rather, it focuses on our attachment for goals, people and objects and our attached desire and passion; our mental fixations (Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). We know that developed and psychologically mature individuals in both conceptualisations involve the individual who is autonomous and shares concern for others and well-being. (Sahdra et al., 2010). The secure person in Western attachment theory is who has developed secure relationships with their caregivers and others (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). How then,

can a Buddhist non-attached individual achieve the same growth as a Western attached individual? And do they differ in their personal strivings?

In Buddhist concepts, unhealthy fixations on mental representations are the cause of human suffering. This is known as attachment. The world is seen as in continual flux and change, as an interdependent world, and our desire to view phenomena as permanent and static causes us suffering (Sahdra & Shaver, in press). Therefore, attachment is a cognitive function that needs to be controlled and avoided; however, this understanding of attachment is not meant to leave the individual without context and disconnection (Elsass, 2008). Agrawal (as cited in Mehta, 1985) in an analysis of attachment concluded that it separates individuals from reality by drawing a division in the world between what is his, and what is not his; and therefore the individual becomes self-enclosed.

Clinging, desperation, and dissatisfaction are states of being that are characterised by attachment (Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). In their review, the non-attached individual is one who engages in autonomous, open-minded and accepting thought. These individuals are capable of being aware of mental phenomena, whether positive, negative or neutral, without clinging to them or pushing them away. Anxious fixations on mental images and desires are absent, and so is suffering. Attached individuals are those who cling to positive life events and experiences, desiring that they will not change; and become fixated on success and failure. The non-attached individual is one who learns to accept the world as it is and is not fixated on desire for the outcome of life events and possession. Lamis and Dvorak (in press) state that non-attached individuals are able to assign value to a life outside of objects, people, situations, material possessions over which little control can be exerted. Sahdra et al. (2010) expect that non-attachment positively correlate with similar constructs such as mindfulness and acceptance, which are similar cognitive styles of open-minded thinking.

In a paper by Pande & Naidu (1992) the concept of Anāsakti, meaning non-attachment, refers to an end state of self-actualisation, and the means to this end. Engaging in actions without attachment to their consequences is the means to this self-realisation. Importantly, we must attend to the fact that there will likely be conceptual and practical differences between non-attachment in Buddhist practice and in the related Westerner; however it does not mean Westerners are incapable of non-attachment. The Nonattachment Scale, created by Sahdra, Shaver, and Brown (2010) is a focus of this study in measuring non-attachment in participants. It is a sound tool, using classical and contemporary Buddhist writings and expert opinion to form a scale that can reliably assess this concept in average American participants. This will be explored in greater depth in the methods section.

Non-attachment is not about abandoning aspiration-oriented behaviour, but rather, abandoning the excessive desire and passion (attachment) for strivings and their positive or negative outcomes. Thus we can reconcile the differences between the healthy individual in the Western concept of secure attachment and the healthy individual in the concept of non-attachment. The present study seeks to examine how non-attachment can relate to personal strivings despite this seemingly contrary weakness in desire, and add valuable information to the scarce body of knowledge on non-attachment and its outcomes; particularly striving success.

Personal Strivings

Personal strivings are recurring goals that are characteristic of the individual (Elliott, 1998). These goals can take a variety of forms, for example wanting to appear attractive to the opposite sex, to be famous, to become more intellectual or to earn money. These personal strivings give direction to individuals' behaviour and our daily life experiences. We select and alter our lives' courses in order to attain fulfilment of our strivings (Emmons, 1986). Our quality of functioning and overall psychological and physiological wellbeing are likely linked

to our choice of personal strivings (Emmons & Little, as cited in Elliott 1998). It is a well

understood concept in our society that our subjective well-being is soundly dependent on

being able to strive and progress towards these strivings; many theories of well-being are

goal-derived in nature.

Emmons (1986) found that characteristics of personal strivings were better able to

account for variance in subjective well-being than personality traits. Individuals were asked

to generate a list of personal strivings and score them on a variety of dimensions. For

example, an ambivalence dimension (their unhappiness upon achievement) and a social

desirability dimension were measured. After this, they entered a phase of three weeks in

which they were periodically sampled pertaining to their mood and thoughts. Individuals who

perceived their strivings as important and valued had the highest life satisfaction, and even

the mere presence of valued strivings was associated with higher life satisfaction. Negative

affect was correlated with the strivings interference with other strivings, low probability of

success and importantly ambivalence towards strivings. Positive affect was associated with

valued strivings, past fulfilment and degree of effort. The study demonstrates the significance

of valued strivings in the level of well-being. Emmons and King (1998) conducted a similarly

designed study based on ambivalence and conflict pertaining to goals. They found that

motivational conflict was a significant predictor of psychological and physical ill-being. King

and Emmons (1990) found that ambivalent emotional strivings were correlated with

psychological distress and measures of physical symptomatology.

As evident, the properties of personal strivings are able to give us greater insight into

their effect on our well-being and behaviours. Strivings can be characterised amongst various

dimensions which will be explored in this thesis. The content of these strivings are highly

influential, and in the present study, goal content was permeated into several categories. One

such striving dimension is the extent to which they are *approach* versus *avoidance* types of

goals. Elliott (1998) recognises this distinction in the regulatory focus of the goal. Approach goals are focused on a positive outcome, or state of being whilst trying to move toward and maintain this state or outcome. Conversely, avoidance goals have their focus on negative outcomes or states. The regulation of avoidance goals involves moving away from or reducing these outcomes or states. Another significant dimension of these strivings are the extent to which they are *authentic* versus *controlled*. It is inevitable that people will at least pursue some goals in life which they do not personally identify with.

The Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliott, 1999) reflects this dimension. The self-concordance (authenticity) of a striving is the extent to which the striving reflects their personal interests and values. Individuals undertaking authentic strivings perceive their locus of causality internally i.e. resulting from their own choices. On the other hand, controlled strivings (non-concordant) are those which are externally influenced by others (such as for reward or praise) or by sanctions of anxiety and guilt. These relate to another dimension of strivings, being the *importance* of the striving to the individual. The extent to which strivings are authentic or controlled has an influence on well-being and striving success (Sheldon & Elliott, 1999).

The content of these strivings can furthermore be classed as extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic goals are concerned with relations to other people; for example, "helping others." Intrinsic goals are those which refer to the self or are self-directed; for example, "I want to be a better student". In addition, there are several subcategories of strivings identified in this study. These properties cover the *independence* of the striving (concern with autonomy), *self-presentation* (concern with impression on others), *personal growth and health* (improving one's mental/physical capacity), *maladaptiveness* (aversion to growth and change), *generativity* (providing for the future, embodying goodness towards others or creativity) and *spiritual/self-transcendence* (affirmation or belief in spirituality, morality and unity beyond

the self). It is likely that the nature of personal strivings will differ between attached and non-attached individuals. It is hypothesised that non-attached individuals will be more successful at their strivings, and this is theorised through three pathways: through the greater well-being related to non-attachment, the innate resilience of non-attached individuals, and the strength in authenticity of their goals.

Non-attachment and well-being

There is support for the notion that greater well-being leads to greater success, which will be explored later. It is predicted that non-attached individuals will have greater success in their strivings due to greater levels of well-being. This well-being is brought about by the mechanism of non-attachment and related concepts such as mindfulness, which may serve as protective factors against threats to well-being. A study conducted by Lamis and Dvorak (in press). They found that consistent with previous research, mindfulness and nonattachment serve as protective factors against depressive symptoms, as they negatively correlated with these symptoms. Depressive symptoms were positively correlated with suicidal rumination, which is of contrary nature to non-attachment (as a mental fixation). Pande & Naidu (1992) present that within Western literature it has been found that perception of the thwarting of desires presents potential dangers to well-being, as it constitutes a major category of life stressors. Non-attached individuals are not as attached to desire and thus will experience less stress.

Buddhist principles have also been introduced the treatment of a variety of disorders, for example with demonstrated efficacy against mood and anxiety disorders (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010) and other emotional problems. These treatments are based on mindfulness, being a similar construct to non-attachment. Mindfulness, similar in having roots in Buddhist principle, is defined as open and receptive awareness of one's thoughts and feelings (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Brown and Ryan conducted an experience-sampling study,

and found that self-regulated behaviour and positive emotional states was predicted by mindfulness. Furthermore, a clinical intervention study on cancer patients demonstrated that a decline in mood disturbance and stress concurred with increase in mindfulness over time.

The aforementioned literature suggests that non-attached individuals are more likely to have greater levels of well-being. This fostered positive state will feed into their capabilities of achieving success in striving. Review of literature by Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008) found that past research evidenced a relationship between workplace success and happiness. Happy people, relative to less happy peers, earned more, displayed better performance and performed more helpful acts. Haase, Poulin, and Heckhausen (2012) found that positive affect was a predictor of primary control striving, being the motivation to overcome obstacles, and invest time and effort into the pursuit of important life goals. Their earlier cover of literature demonstrated that primary control striving is crucial for success in various life domains. Successful subjective (well-being, subjective career success) and objective (e.g. educational attainment) outcomes were predicted by primary control striving. We can infer from this study that positive affect indirectly but significantly contributes to success in striving.

Conversely, two significant studies found evidence to the contrary (Carver, 2003; Labroo & Patrick, 2009). Both studies postulated that positive mood can have a negative effect on the motivational system, being that positive affect indicates satisfactory progress towards goals leading to conservation of effort. Negative mood may lead to greater effort intensity due to experienced discrepancy. However, an important distinction must be made. These studies were based on goal-related positive affect, whereas the study by Haase, Poulin, and Heckhausen (2012) was based on incidental positive affect, which is a better representation of general well-being. Labroo and Patrick (2009) in fact indicated in their study that research suggests happiness led to greater focus on long-term life goals, whereas

negative affect influenced individuals to focus on immediate needs. Long-term life goals are a better representation of personal strivings than immediate goals as these strivings can consist of a number of subordinate goals (Emmons, 1968)

Literature has provided evidence for the fact that non-attached individuals adopt cognitive patterns that serve as protective factors against negative well-being, and promote greater well-being. Well-being and associated positive states have been correlated with success and thus, this is one pathway through which non-attached individuals will likely be more successful at strivings.

Non-attachment, goal content and resilience

Pursuit of goals which the individual identifies with, and represents their values and goals, leads to greater happiness and success (Sheldon & Elliott, 1999; Sheldon, 2001; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). Non-attached individuals are typified by pursuit of these authentic goals. Sahdra, Shaver, and Brown (2010) state that as an individual becomes older, non-attachment is likely to increase due to life experience in loss and change. Sheldon (2001) found that older people's goal systems were more characterised by increased maturity and personality integration (referring to less emphasis on superficial, extrinsic values and more emphasis on prosocial and personally identified goals). Older individual's strivings were correlated with intrinsic values of self-acceptance, intimacy and prosocial behaviour rather than extrinsic values of wealth, popularity and attractiveness. They were more likely to engage in self-determined goals, had greater identification with authentic motivation and strove less due to guilt or internal pressure. Older people demonstrate values and are characteristic of non-attachment lending support to Sahdra et al.'s (2010) theory.

We know that the state of non-attachment will lead to these individuals to place lesser emphasis on people, objects and situations as they are not mentally fixated on outcomes (Lamis & Dvorak, in press). Actions taken by non-attached individuals are without intention

to boost the ego, with these actions free from the motive of the self or self-seeking (Agrawal, 1982). The strivings of non-attached individuals are unlikely to be attached to the superficial and will be more likely to approach strivings that are inherently meaningful, as their level of well-being is not solely dependent on failure or success. They do not attempt to find solidarity in the comforts presented by social relationships, material possessions, reputation or wealth. Thus non-attached individuals are more likely to be motivated by autonomous or authentic reasons and strive for intrinsic outcomes that are personally satisfying, and not externally motivated by others or objects.

Studies concerning the relationship between autonomous (i.e. authentic) strivings and well-being are well documented, demonstrating that they provide benefits to well-being compared to controlled or extrinsic strivings (Sheldon, 2004; Emmons, 1986). As reviewed earlier, well-being levels will contribute to the success of personal strivings. However attention must be heeded towards the more direct link between authentic strivings and success. A significant study by Sheldon and Elliott (1999) found that self-concordance of goals (their consistency with the person's values and interests) predicted goal-attainment, mediated by sustained effort. Participants were asked to list 10 personal goals that would be pursued during a semester and rated reasons for pursuit. These participants returned three times over the semester and rated how much effort and progress they made towards these goals. The self-concordance was positively correlated with effort and progress ratings during the semester. Individuals that set goals that were self-concordant in nature achieved greater success due to their persistency in striving. This reflects the nature of the non-attached individual. The volitional strength behind external and extrinsic goals are likely to wither when obstacles are encountered, because these goals are less representative of personal values and interests.

In some conceptual similarity to this, Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, and Kasser (2004) note that extrinsic content and controlled motives often share important features. They found that people who are strive for extrinsic outcomes, such as wealth and image, tend to negatively report well-being with negative physical and psychological symptoms. They concluded that peoples' well-being is causally affected by their choice of goals. Non-attached individuals are not concerned with extrinsic outcomes and thus experience more optimal levels of well-being, contributing to goal progress. Sheldon, Kasser, Smith, and Share (2002) conducted a study on goal attainment and personal growth. It was found that people higher in initial integration achieved greater progress towards their goals. This personal integration referred to whether the locus of causality was perceived internally; integrated individuals' goals were motivated by deeper values and interests. They also had higher levels of well-being. As non-attached people are more likely to strive for authentically motivated goals, and intrinsic outcomes, they should be more successful in their strivings.

Another significant factor contributing to the likelihood of goal progression in non-attached individuals is their inherent resilience due to their cognitive style. Non-attached individuals have traits of cognitive flexibility, nonreactivity and quicker recovery from upsets. They have a genuine care for present situations, and are able to be responsive and engaged in these without aggrandisement and self-degradation (Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). These traits should enable more optimal progression towards personal strivings; non-attachment should make individuals more adaptive and better at handling failure. The lesser focus on outcome, release from fixations and better handling of failure will contribute to successful progression in striving. This is supported by Pande and Naidu (1992) who believe that Anisakt (non-attached) individuals' worldly endeavours are more effective. The individual is unified with the act of striving without concerns of success and failure, likes or dislikes and other irrelevant thoughts. This results in consequent task excellence. Mental

preoccupations and fears are not hindering the individual from the full use of their potential ability, and thus are able to be more concentrated and absorbed in the task at hand.

A study conducted by Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) supports the uninterrupted task excellence concept proposed by Pande and Naidu (1992). Non-attached individuals may be approach-motivated, as approach-motivated individuals were able to enjoy and engage in puzzle tasks and spend less time cognising about self-concerns. Avoidance-oriented individuals displayed lower levels of task involvement and decreased intrinsic motivation, resulting in less enjoyable task experience.

Theorists have derived two distinct types of goals, being a dichotomy between performance goals, and mastery goals. Performance goals are those that are focused on demonstrating competence relative to others, whilst mastery goals are focused on developing competence or task mastery (Elliott, 1999). Non-attached individuals are more likely to engage in mastery goals than performance goals due to their externally detached functioning. Mastery goals are known to provide greater positive consequences for achievement-related outcomes than performance goals, and have greater effort and intrinsic value applied to them (Dompnier, Darnon, & Butera, 2009; Elliot, 1999). There are some criticisms with the standard performance-mastery model, with Elliot citing it as useful but insufficient. He instead combines the performance-mastery and approach-avoidance models into a 2x2 model (e.g. one type is performance-avoidant, meaning avoiding lower levels of relative competency than before). Mastery-approach is considered the most optimal goal choice, which characterises the non-attached individual. Mastery-avoidant goals and both types of performance goals theoretically should not be chosen by the non-attached individual due to either their externally based (performance) nature or mental fixation on negativity (avoidant).

However, mastery goals have not been demonstrated to unequivocally result in greater progress outcomes, for example academic success which was studied by Dompnier, Darnon,

and Butera (2009). They found that mastery goals' influence on academic success was mediated by social desirability and social utility (personal university success) variables. The higher the social utility of mastery goal endorsement, the greater the academic outcome was reported, and vice versa. Non-attached individuals are more likely to inherently endorse mastery goals, due to unimportance of external pressures, and thus take full advantage of mastery goals.

Research Questions

First, it is predicted that non-attached individuals will have better success pertaining their personal strivings, due to the aforementioned reasons of well-being, authenticity and resilience. This will be measured by the *progress* dimension. Second, it is expected that the personal strivings of non-attached individuals will be more authentic, with the levels of non-attachment and *authenticity* positively correlating. Third, it is predicted that the personal strivings of non-attached individuals will be less *controlled*. Non-attachment lends itself to choosing goals that are more intrinsically than extrinsically determined. As non-attachment is a cognitive style that releases mental fixations on aversive outcomes, we hypothesise that non-attached individuals will engage in more *approach* than *avoidance* goals. Fifth, we predict that age will correlate positively with *non-attachment* due to maturing cognitive development. To add depth to the study, we will explore if *non*-attachment has any notable relationships with goal-content categories. We will also explore any differences between genders on key variables. The present study will use a survey based design. Participants are administered a survey of multiple questionnaires, including the Personal Strivings Measure (PSM) and the Nonattachment Scale (NAS). Participants list personal strivings, and then these strivings are assessed by participants and also trained raters. These ratings pertain to the previously mentioned striving characteristics such as authenticity and progress. We will draw

inferences from correlational analyses on the results of this survey. The main variables in this study are *non-attachment, progress, authenticity, controlled, importance* and *progress.*

Method

Design

This study was designed to assess relationships between non-attachment, and personal striving characteristics. Participants completed the study through an online survey. However this study incorporates a planned missing data design, in which the participants did not respond to all items. The planned missing data design was used to reduce survey administration time for participants, which can improve data quality. It would also reduce instances of unplanned missing data. Administration times were approximately 20-30 minutes. We used a multiple imputation procedure to simulate the remaining incomplete data, given the available information. This procedure was performed in the statistical software R (R Core Team, 2013). A software package, Amelia II, (Honaker et al., 2010) was used to implement an Expectation-Maximization (EM) algorithm with bootstrapping (King et al., 2001., Dempster et al., 1977). A total of 25 imputations were conducted in order for estimates to be as accurate as possible. Main analyses used a pooled dataset, which was a combination of all 25 imputations. This study has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Western Sydney (See Appendix A).

Participants and procedure

The study presents cross-sectional data on a sample of 8038 participants aged 18 – 99 years ($M = 49$, $SD = 16.96$). The participants were sampled from the United States in an online survey. The pool of participants was obtained from a United States-based survey company, as part of a randomised study. Participants within the company take surveys to obtain credits, or merchandise points with which they can redeem gifts or other endowments

such as cash prizes. The firm recruited participants through methods such as direct mail, online and telephone.

The responses used in this study were part of a larger survey about general personality characteristics and well-being. The present study focuses on a subset of this data. Participants were administered the survey through an online website. At the beginning of the survey, participants were told to confirm they were participating of their own free will by clicking "Yes." All participants were administered survey sections on demographics, and the Personal Strivings Measure. After completing these sections, they were then randomly allocated 60 items from the remaining items, which were a combination of other questionnaires including the Nonattachment Scale.

Measures

Demographics Questionnaire. Participants were asked to respond to questions assessing various socioeconomic characteristics (see Appendix B). These questions pertained to information on their age, gender, highest level of education, marital status, number of household occupants, ethnicity, country of birth, primary language, total household income, height, weight, and meditation practices. However, only age and gender are significant variables in the present study.

Personal Strivings Measure (PSM). This is a newly created measure partly based upon the works of Emmons and McAdams (1991), and Sheldon and Kasser (2001). The measure was designed for assessment of goal-related constructs in participants' personal strivings, consisting of an 8-item questionnaire (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to write down four personal strivings. These strivings were defined as "the goals that you typically try to obtain in your life." Two examples were provided; being "Trying to be physically attractive," and "Trying to seek new and exciting experiences." Participants were

told that these personal strivings were to consist of broader life goals, as opposed to answers that may be too specific (i.e., I will clean the car today).

After writing a personal striving, participants themselves are asked to rate each striving quantitatively, pertaining to certain striving properties. Participants rated each striving on seven items, with goal-related constructs (e.g., *authenticity*) evaluated based on their answers. Participants responded on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 6 (Agree Strongly).

Striving *authenticity* (how personally important the striving was; for pleasure or for fun) was measured as an average of 3 items (Q48, Q50, and Q52). For example, one item used was "I strive for this because I believe it is an important goal to have. Although this goal may once have been taught by others, now I endorse it freely and value it wholeheartedly". Striving *control* (how much the striving was due to external pressures, such as guilt) was measured as an average of 2 items (Q44 & Q46). One item used to assess *control* was" I strive for this because I would feel ashamed, guilty or anxious if I didn't strive for it".

The category of *importance* (how generally important the striving is) was assessed on one item, Q40. Striving *progress* was measured from one item (Q42). The item was "In the past 10 weeks I have made progress on this striving".

Coding. After administering the test, we rated these strivings qualitatively about other goal-related constructs. All coding was performed qualitatively, and performed by three different and trained judges. The final score for each striving was taken as the average of the three judges' evaluations. These ratings were based on interpreting the striving itself and no other items the participant answered about them.

Participants' strivings were categorised into four different types of motivation, being *achievement, intimacy, affiliation* or *power* oriented. These categories were adapted from the work of Emmons and McAdams (1991). Emmons and McAdams sought to determine

relations between categories of personal strivings (the aforementioned) and their relation to different types of personality measures; being the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), and corresponding categorical subscales of the Personality Research Form (PRF). Striving categories tended to correlate significantly with TAT motives of achievement, intimacy and power. The striving categories of power and achievement were significantly correlated with PRF Dominance and PRF Achievement, respectively.

Categories of intimacy and affiliation were more weakly correlated with the respective measures of PRF Affiliation and PRF Nurturance, although not determined significant. The authors also determined that combined TAT and PRF scores could significantly predict striving categories (e.g., TAT Achievement and PRF Achievement could significantly predict achievement strivings). The coding system of the four aforementioned categories as posited by Emmons and McAdams demonstrated good construct validity, hence forming a basis for the present coding system.

Raters were also asked to rate additional content-specific constructs. Raters employed a coding system which was adapted from Emmons (1991) and Sheldon and Kasser (2001) as a guide for content assessment (see Appendix D). This outlines possible categories of which personal strivings can belong to more than one. These were *intrapersonal* vs. *interpersonal* goals, personal *growth and health*, *self-presentation*, *maladaptiveness*, *independence*, *generativity* (creativity, outlook towards the next generation, symbolic immortality, giving of the self), and *spiritual/self-transcendence* (divine awareness, universal equality, oneness and unity). They were also rated on how *approach*-oriented they were (towards something positive) versus *avoidant* (away from something negative). However in the present study, *independence, maladaptiveness, power,* and *intrapersonal/interpersonal* variables were excluded.

Raters employed the coding system on subsets of the data in Microsoft Excel. Each striving was listed, along with adjacent, blank cells for assigning striving motivation categories and content-specific categories. To assign a category to a striving, a "1" would be placed in the appropriate box. The striving motivation coding system specified that each striving could be motivated and have a primary focus on *power*, *achievement*, *intimacy* or *affiliation*. Raters picked one category exclusively in most cases. Rating each striving on content-specific constructs, such as *growth and health*, operated differently. Strivings did not specifically require a rating on these constructs, but were rated if appropriate, and could be more than 1 construct. For example, "I want to be rich" does not fulfil any categories. However, in the example of "I want to become stronger and less reliant on others," a rater may place a "1" in the *independence* cell and a "1" in the *growth and health* cell.

Upon review, it was found that the two categories of *affiliation* and *intimacy* tended to overlap when coding. It was a cause for discrepancy and some confusion as to category assignment. As a consequence, *affiliation* and *intimacy* were then collapsed into a single *relationship* category to aid analyses. Inter-rater reliability was high, with Cronbach's alpha > .75 in nearly all measures (see Table 1). *Power* and *maladaptiveness* categories were excluded from the study due to poor inter-rater reliability.

Non-Attachment Scale (NAS). The Non-Attachment Scale is a 30-item questionnaire (See Appendix E) originally designed by Sahdra, Shaver and Brown (2010). It is designed to assess the extent to which a person is non-attached as a personality characteristic. To transliterate the Buddhist concept of non-attachment into modern psychological terms, Sahdra et al. consulted multiple contemporary Buddhist scholars and teachers, current Buddhist writings, and classical Buddhist texts. These teachers were consulted based on recommendation and reputation. Experts used in rating the scale were a mean age of 60 years, averaging 18 years of training and 18 years meditation teaching experience.

After refining an original pool of 72-items down to 30-items, the scale demonstrated a very high internal consistency (α = .94). In the present study, Sahdra, Shaver and Brown (2010) conducted three further studies to assess the integrity of the scale. It was found that it had a sample of 503 adults who meditated obtained significantly higher scores than those who did not. Furthermore, high test-retest reliability was demonstrated. Using 42 participants, the intra-class correlation coefficient was .87 indicating that 74% of the variance was accounted for by the underlying non-attachment construct.

The NAS was further correlated with other measures, to establish convergent and discriminant validity, and examine relationships between non-attachment and other indicators of psychological functioning. A multitude of measures were used, such as the Self Compassion Scale, Big Five Inventory, and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. They found the NAS correlated positively with multiple hypothesised constructs such as well-being and mindfulness, and negatively with materialism and anxious attachment. Therefore the NAS has been exhibited as a reliable and valid tool for measuring non-attachment.

Higher scores on the NAS indicate higher levels of non-attachment. Participants respond to NAS items on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 6 (Agree Strongly). It is labelled as the "Approach to Life Questionnaire" on the form, and participants are told that its purpose is for understanding participants' approach to life, and views about themselves, others and life in general. They are asked to respond in a manner such that their answers "really reflects" their experiences rather than "what you think your experience should be". 'Examples of items from the questionnaire include "I can accept the flow of events in my life without hanging onto them or pushing them away," and "I do not feel I need escape or avoid bad experiences in my life."

The NAS is scored by computing the mean of the 30 items. Items 4, 13, and 24 are reverse scored when used in scoring. In the present study, an exact figure for Cronbach's

alpha cannot be obtained for a pooled sample. As a consequence, Cronbach's alpha for this study will be the average of the 25 imputations used. Internal consistency is high ($\alpha = .92$).

Results

The original sample size was 8038 participants. However, some of the data was incomplete due to missing or inadequate responses, and 154 cases were excluded. The remaining sample size used in analyses was 7884 participants. For preliminary analysis on demographic variables, only the original, unmodified dataset was used (see Table 2). Bivariate correlations were conducted on the pooled dataset. However, visual inspection revealed that many variables appeared skewed. To determine significance, we looked at both Spearman's ρ and Pearson's r. This was to safeguard against issues with outliers and violations of normality. Significance will only be assumed if the correlation is significant in both analyses. For consistency and ease of interpretability, only Pearson's r will be reported.

Analyses revealed a mostly even gender split in the participant pool. The majority of the sample (close to two thirds) had completed "some college" or a "college diploma." Income levels were roughly distributed amongst participants; the largest represented income level was $20,000 to $40,000 with one quarter of participants earning that level.

Descriptive analysis was performed on the pooled dataset (a combination of all 25 imputations) for main variables (see Table 3). The main variables were measured on a scale from 1 to 6, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the variable. However, a*voidance* was measured from 1 -2, with higher or lower scores representing more or less avoidance in strivings. Participants were moderately inclined towards higher levels of *nonattachment*. Striving *importance* was very high amongst participants, with mean *importance* reaching almost the maximum. Participants' strivings tended to be higher in *authenticity*, well above

the scale midpoint of 3. Participants tended to be moderate in the amount of *controlled*

strivings, with the mean score at the midpoint on the scale.

Bivariate correlations were conducted to assess relationships between *nonattachment*

and main striving properties (see Table 4). It was revealed that *nonattachment* is moderately

associated with striving *progress*. *Nonattachment* also had a moderate relationship with

authenticity. *Importance* had a small to moderate association with *nonattachment*.

Additionally, *nonattachment* showed small but negative correlations with both avoidant and

controlled strivings.

We tested for a relationship between age and *nonattachment.* There was a moderate

correlation; $r(7882) = .31$, $p < .01$. Bivariate correlations conducted on striving content-

specific categories and *non-attachment*(see Table 5) revealed that *nonattachment* and

spirituality had a weak relationship, $r(5620) = .10$, $p < .01$. There was no further evidence of

notable relationships between *nonattachment* and content-specific categories.

 Due to the nature of imputation use, an independent samples *t*-test could not be

reliably used to determine significant differences between genders on main variables. Manual

calculations were performed to determine if any significant differences between males and

females existed (see Table 6). There were significant differences on *importance*, *authenticity,*

controlled, and *avoidant* scores between males and females. Males scored higher on *control*

strivings than females on average. However, females had higher means than males on

authenticity, avoidance, and *importance.* There was no statistically significant difference on

nonattachment and *progress* scores.

As an exploratory measure, we tested for any significant differences in correlations

between males and females, in *nonattachment* and main striving variables. No gender

differences were greater than .11.

Discussion

The aim of this study was examine links between the levels of non-attachment and personal strivings. It was theorised that possessing the quality of non-attachment would have a positive effect on personal well-being, and personal striving. The results provided evidence that lent support for all hypotheses. All hypothesised correlations found were significant, and also in agreement with the direction of the hypotheses. The hypothesis that *non-attachment* would indicate higher progress was supported by the data. As theory dictated, a moderate correlation existed between *non-attachment* and striving *progress.* Individuals who were higher in non-attachment were more likely to have made progress on their striving within the last 10 weeks.

The hypothesis pertaining to non-attachment correlating positively with authenticity was also supported by the data. There was a moderate correlation between non-attachment and authenticity; people higher in non-attachment were more likely to have authentic goals. It was hypothesised that *nonattachment* would correlate negatively with *controlled* strivings; this was supported as a weak but significant negative correlation existed. Individuals higher in non-attachment were also hypothesised to more likely choose *approach* goals. This hypothesis was also supported to a small degree, as a weak-to-moderate negative correlation was found between *nonattachment* and *avoid* strivings.

The moderate correlation of *nonattachment* and goal *progress* suggests that the qualities of non-attachment have at least some relevance in dictating goal progress. Considering the nature of this study as an early exploration of the field of nonattachment and personal strivings, unfortunately there is very limited past research of which we can draw direct comparison to. However, the reviewed literature suggested that non-attachment would provide a positive effect on psychological functioning, adjustment and well-being (Lamis & Dvorak, in press, Pande & Naidu, 1992, Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt & Oh, 2010, Brown &

Ryan, 2003). People with greater protective functioning and well-being could be expected to achieve more of their goals, as supported by the literature (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008, Haase, Poulin, & Heckhausen, 2008; Labroo & Patrick, 2009). The correlation between *nonattachment* and *progress* showed that approximately 10% of striving progress can be explained by levels of non-attachment. In terms of such a large sample, it is a significant factor. Therefore our main hypothesis was supported; individuals who are higher in non-attachment are more likely to make striving progress.

A significant theoretical basis for dictating progress was non-attachment and predicted *authenticity*. Literature reviewed expressed that people with authentic goals would make more progress on these goals (Sheldon & Elliott, 1999; Sheldon, Kasser, Smith, & Share, 2002). This was because authentic strivings provide better motivation for the individual and contribute to resilience in the face of failure. Authenticity displayed a moderate relationship with non-attachment; we can infer that non-attached individuals were more likely to choose authentic goals. This finding lends support to the literature reviewed, and provides support for one pathway by which we purported non-attached individuals would achieve better progress. Additionally, a strong correlation also existed between *authenticity* and *progress.* Significantly, the results showed substantial evidence for authenticity's influence in goal progress. This provides support for the theoretical position that non-attached individuals would strive for more authentic goals. The connection between *nonattachment* and *authenticity,* and *authenticity* and *progress* helps validate the complete pathway for which non-attached individuals are better able to make progress on strivings.

By the same logic, we expected a negative correlation between *controlled* strivings and *progress*. However, interestingly there was no correlation in either direction between *controlled* motivation and *progress*, which seems contradictory to previous literature. This may be because the effects of controlled strivings are mediated by a link between *importance*

and *progress*. Perhaps strivings that are controlled can still remain important enough to counteract any negative motivational effects of externally controlled strivings. However, *controlled* motivation had a weak negative correlation with *importance*, whilst *authenticity* had a strong positive correlation with *importance*. This is a statistic also in support of Kesser (2008) in which they identified authentic goals as having more personal importance to the individual. The weak negative correlation between *controlled* strivings and *non-attachment* provides some limited support to the hypotheses about non-attachment's link with authentic strivings. However, we should also expect a negative correlation between *controlled* strivings and *progress*. However, evidently this was not the case. Controlled and authentic strivings are seemingly opposite conceptually, yet the results provide mixed support.

A very small, but positive correlation between authenticity and controlled strivings was found. This is in contrast to what theory would dictate. Although the effect size was very small ($r = .07$), we would expect that authentic strivings would have a significant negative correlation with controlled strivings. Authentic strivings are defined as those that are done for the self, and controlled strivings are externally controlled; to please others. Perhaps to some extent strivings could often be equally divided between the two. We may need more specificity in defining these variables. For example, an individual's personal striving may be to become a doctor. This might be done for personal fulfilment (authentic), to live up to parents' expectations (controlled), or for making the parents proud (which can be both authentic and controlled at the same time). Authentic and controlled strivings may not be mutually exclusive, and just differ in their degree of involvement in a striving.

The hypothesis regarding *nonattachment* and choosing *approach*-oriented strivings existed not for the purpose of measuring of goal progress, but as a result of exploring non-attachment qualities. Avoid strivings by nature are based on aversion to negative outcomes. Individuals with high non-attachment could be expected to have more approach-oriented

strivings, due to a lesser focus on aversion to negative outcomes and dissatisfaction (Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). The existence of a faint negative correlation provides limited support for the hypothesis; however in such a large pool of participants it is not inconsequential. There was also a possibility that people would make less progress on avoid goals than approach goals. If a person is seeking to avoid adverse consequences, they can be considered to have a likelihood of lesser progress than someone who is adopting an approach striving. This is because approach strivings may be more in line with what a person wants to have, or become; possibly providing greater motivation. The data supports this theory to some extent, as a negative weak-to-moderate correlation was found between *avoid* goals and *progress*. This provides another explanation for how non-attached individuals were able to make better progress on strivings; there were slightly less likely to choose avoid strivings. Possibly due to avoid strivings' negative correlation with progress, non-attached individuals are able to make better progress on their strivings.

A supported finding was the moderate correlation between *age* and *nonattachment*. This provides good evidence for Sahdra, Shaver and Brown's (2010) statement that non-attachment is likely to become more prevalent as one ages and matures. This correlation is also in similarity with Sheldon (2001), who purported that as people grow older, their psychological functioning becomes more mature and integrated, and thus would demonstrate more qualities similar to non-attachment. Another noteworthy finding was a weak but positive significant correlation between non-attachment and *spiritual/self-transcendence.* This is not a surprising correlation, as the definition of this category is to do with strivings that are "oriented above and beyond the self." Specifically, it includes aspects such as divine awareness, promotion of universal equality, or some form of unity with others or the universe. Non-attached individuals are more unlikely to be fixated on personal and self-serving rewards.

Furthermore, there may be some connection between non-attachment and religious teaching and practice. According to a survey conducted by Kosmin & Keysar (2008), 76% of American adults identified themselves as Christian. A common component of Christianity is the giving of the self to a higher being, and Christians are taught practices of loving others and giving to them. In this case, non-attachment may have some connection to the large majority of Christian denomination in American individuals. In a next study it may be useful to collect further demographic information on religious denomination. Except for the aforementioned case of *nonattachment* and *spirituality*, non-attachment had a minimal influence on goal content. Considering that goal content is largely influenced by many individual influences and life factors, it is not unexpected.

Exploratory analyses revealed that there was no significant difference on mean *non-attachment* scores between males and females. However, analyses had revealed that there were several significant differences between males and females on other mean variable scores. As such, correlations between *non-attachment* and other striving properties were likely to also differ. However further analyses into gender differences are beyond the scope of this study. This does provide a basis for which further forays into personal strivings can differ. Exploring the mechanisms behind non-attachment between men and women, and how they might differ, would provide some useful further knowledge on the topic.

Limitations

One possible limitation was that we employed a planned missing data design. The data used in this study was therefore only based on participants' real responses to a few items. Of course, this presents some problem to the validity of the study, with only part of the data being real data. There are some associated ethical concerns with the making up of data. However, as mentioned earlier the multiple imputation procedure consisting of 25 imputations was conducted to ensure accuracy was high as possible. De Goeij, van Diepen,

Jager, Tripepi, Zoccali, and Dekker (2013) conducted an overview of the history of multiple imputation use and efficacy. They concluded that the multiple imputation procedure provides unbiased standard errors and estimates. The authors encouraged the future use of multiple imputation, due to its basis on calculating from known variables leading to the best estimation of truth.

The correlational analyses have given us insight into the relationships between non-attachment and personal striving; however due to the nature of correlations there are some inherent limitations. The analyses cannot give us insight as to the nature of causality. We know that the levels of non-attachment in the participants did positively predict goal progress to a moderate extent. However, additional variables can exist that can explain the results. This is especially important in this research area (personal strivings) that is quite broad, and the ultimate outcomes and determinations of personal strivings are most likely dependent on very wide variety of factors, whether originating from cognitive styles, personality, and more.

More specifically, one example was our theorised pathway to progress pertaining to well-being. As we explained, non-attached individuals should be experiencing higher levels of happiness and well-being. However, it could be that non-attachment is simply a symptom of positive well-being; and that one's well-being is not actually determined by levels of non-attachment. Therefore, this highlights a possible problem with our theory and another route to explore. We may not only have been exploring the effects of non-attachment on goal progress, but also indirectly exploring the effects of well-being on progress. Future research into non-attachment may be served well by also including measures of well-being in the participants and exploring to what extent non-attachment and well-beings' effects differ on personal striving, or other constructs. Nevertheless, the construct of non-attachment was adequately measured due to Sahdra, Shaver and Brown's (2010) reliable and valid construction of the scale.

There were also some possible contaminants to the data answered by participants. The survey was administered soon after the end of the year. In this case, many personal strivings may have been influenced by common new years' resolutions. Many of the answers within the data were pertaining to personal growth and health goals, most particularly weight loss. Although weight loss is likely a very common goal, it is a near typical example of a new years' resolution. In addition, some of the responses could very well have not been strivings that were particularly familiar to the person. . Responding to the strivings measure may have invoked reflective processes in participants. It is imaginable that simply being asked about personal strivings provoked forms of spontaneously generated strivings; we cannot expect every person to know what they exactly want in life. If the chance arises to replicate this study, we might also change the amount of strivings required. We cannot assume that every person has four personal strivings that are easily recalled during a questionnaire. The sample itself did not present any problems. We consider the sample to be nationally representative, as it represented a broad range of ages and ethnicities.

The coding process is also qualitatively reliant on the coders. Coders were provided detailed sheets to guide them in coding, however the process of categorising strivings can sometimes be difficult. An improvement for future research may be to make each striving not mutually exclusive, for example the current reduction of *relationship* versus *achievement*. Strivings can have more than one apparent motive, and often lines could be blurred between assigning different categories; for example, "buying a new family home." Is that an *achievement* striving or a *relationship* striving? In the future it may be more practical to get participants' themselves to have more involvement in the coding process. Participants would be better able to make sense of their own strivings and provide more accurate judgement. Coding could be introduced into the questionnaire for participants' to do themselves. There is a possibility that this may introduce participant bias or demand characteristics into the study;

however if a method can be found to reduce or remove their effects, it would be useful for future research.

Implications and Future Research

Not only is non-attachment positively influential on goal progress, but also it likely has benefit outside of personal strivings. One theorised pathway to positive striving progress was because of the accompanying positive affect and adaptive cognitive style that non-attachment qualities inherently possess. Part of this study was a review of the literature surrounding non-attachment, which is scarce considering its recent emergence. This study sought to add valuable resources to non-attachment. In this case, the combination of psychological benefit and striving progress is some evidence for the possible future use of non-attachment within psychology. Well-being is an avenue for future research as there is no direct documented evidence for non-attachment's potential effects. A concrete link between non-attachment and happiness would provide some concrete support for non-attachment's potential beneficial uses, and also it is likely to have some use in reducing stress.

We believe that integrating some form of non-attachment interventions into existing practices would be to the advantage of both patients and psychologists, by providing further and useful alternatives in therapy. For example, the most currently popular psychotherapeutic option available to clients is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Non-attachment may have some practical use within the cognitive component of CBT, particularly its emphasis on the restructuring and reorganising of a client's thinking patterns, and teaching clients useful skills. The quality of non-attachment is releasing oneself from anxious mental fixations on desires and outcomes. Theoretically, learning strategies and skills related to non-attachment would be a useful skill for clients. This could have a variety of uses in therapy for patients' psychological functioning. For example, application of non-attachment inspired intervention could be involved in the treatment of social anxiety. We know that one component in the

maintenance of social anxiety and social phobia is called post-event processing (Kocovski & Rector, 2007). This is when the person excessively ruminates on the days' social experiences in a negative light. Clients could learn and adapt to cognitive patterns based on non-attachment, such as becoming less mentally fixated on social outcomes and situations. This could lead to reduced suffering and a possible pathway to helping treat social phobia. Of course, this is hypothetically assuming the best possible scenario. There is some support for this idea as a related construct, mindfulness, has been shown to reduce distress associated with post-event processing (Cassin & Rector, 2011). One can see the value of incorporating principles of non-attachment into therapeutic scenarios. Furthermore, non-attachment may not only have use for psychological health, but it may be useful in a sense to help clients' in making progress with their goals. Psychologists can address mental fixation in clients as a possible roadblock to progress, and this has application outside of personal strivings. Setting and achieving goals are a part of everyday life, whether it be relationships, careers, or even sports. Patients should be educated on the qualities of non-attachment and the possible benefits that adopting this type of cognitive style can provide.

In future research, there are many avenues within the areas of non-attachment and personal strivings to explore, considering their relatively unexplored fields. As such, measuring other constructs such as personality traits will reveal more useful data. For example, relationship could be examined between non-attachment and the Big Five personality traits. Perhaps non-attached individuals could be high in openness to experience or agreeableness, and low in neuroticism. Investigating non-attachments' broader links to other constructs in psychology may heighten its' relevance. Non-attachment may also have a role to play in psychological disorders. As mentioned earlier, it is a possibility that people with social phobia, along with other anxiety disorders, could be particularly low in non-attachment levels.

In the context of replications of this study, administering to a different population sample would add some worthwhile comparison. In particular, a comparison of Western data on non-attachment to populations that are more prevalent in Buddhist tradition would be worthwhile, considering the origin of the current non-attachment measure in Buddhist tradition and practice. Considering the relatively high mean on non-attachment in an American sample, exploring how this may or may not differ in concentrated Buddhist countries may help refine the construct of non-attachment.

Now that some relationship has been established between non-attachment and personal striving, other types of research designs should be considered. A possible design may incorporate a natural groups design on those who are high on non-attachment and those low on non-attachment, and then assessing properties of personal strivings. Developing some form of non-attachment training would be useful in creating an experimental design in order to infer greater causality. Participants can be divided into non-attachment intervention and control groups for experimental research.

We consider this study to be a stepping stone for further research into non-attachment and personal strivings. Knowing that levels of non-attachment have a credible role to play in determining personal striving progress and other characteristics, we can use this as a basis for future practical use of non-attachment and further study. Non-attachment is also likely to have beneficial outcomes for adaptive mental functioning and health. Non-attachment is still in early stages of research, and future research would do well to explore its' likely influences outside of personal strivings; particularly well-being and psychological functioning, alongside striving success. Although it may seem a foreign concept to the Westernised basis of modern psychology, incorporating such cross-cultural concepts may have real value for psychologists and patients alike.

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Table 1

Inter-rater Reliability for Personal Striving Characteristics

Striving Measure	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Avoidance	.90
Spirituality	.90
Relationship	.80
Personal Growth and Health	.80
Generativity	.80
Self/Other	.80
Achievement	.77
Self-Presentation	.77
Independence	.62
Power	< .50
Maladaptiveness	< .50

Table 2

Demographics

	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	3748	47.5
Female	4136	52.5
Income ($)		
0 - 20,000	1152	14.7
20,001 – 40,000	1918	24.5
40,001 – 60,000	1542	19.7
60,001 – 80,000	1169	15
80,001 – 100,000	855	10.9
100,000 +	1176	15.1
Education level completed		
Some high school or less	129	1.6
High school diploma or equivalent	1371	17.4
Some college	2331	29.6
College diploma	2255	28.6
Some graduate/ professional school	538	6.8
Graduate/professional degree	1260	16.0

Table 3

Descriptives of Non-Attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

	M	*SE*	*n*
Nonattachment	4.37	.01	7884
Importance	5.49	.01	5716
Progress	4.33	.01	7884
Authenticity	4.92	.01	7884
Controlled	2.97	.02	7884
Avoidant	1.12	.00	5759

Table 4

Correlations between Non-Attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

	Progress	Avoid	Controlled	Authenticity	Importance	Nonattachment
Progress	—					
Avoid	-.19**	—				
Controlled	.01**	.02	—			
Authenticity	.49**	-.17**	.07**	—		
Importance	.32**	-.04**	-.11**	.60**	—	
Nonattachment	.32**	-.10**	-.20**	.29**	.25**	—

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 5

Correlations between Striving Content and Non-Attachment

	Nonattachment	Relationship	Achievement	Growth/Health	Generativity	Self-Presentation	Spirituality
Nonattachment	—						
Relationship	.04**	—					
Achievement	-.06**	-.93**	—				
Growth/Health	-.05**	-.22**	.32**	—			
Generativity	.06**	.30**	-.38**	-.49**	—		
Self-Presentation	-.04**	-.00	-.07**	-.28**	-.09**	—	
Spirituality	.10**	.12**	-.14**	-.43**	.01	-.06**	—

Note. $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$

Table 6

Gender-Split Descriptives of Non-Attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

	Male			*Female*				
	M	*SEM*	*n*	*M*	*SEM*	*n*	*t*	*r*
Non-Attachment	4.37	.01	3748	4.38	.01	4136	-0.30	-0.00
Importance	5.37	.02	2626	5.60	.01	3090	-9.08[*]	-0.17
Progress	4.35	.02	3748	4.31	.02	4136	0.97	0.02
Authenticity	4.85	.02	3748	4.97	.01	4136	4.24[*]	-0.07
Controlled	3.17	.02	3748	2.79	.02	4136	8.55[*]	0.14
Avoidant	1.10	.00	2603	1.13	.00	3082	-4.08[*]	-0.08

Note. [*] indicates a significant gender difference at the p<.05 level.

Appendix B
Demographics Questionnaire

Q4 Thank you for your interest in this study. Completion of this survey signifies your consent to participate in this research. Please confirm that you are participating in this study of your own free will.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

Q4 Participation in this study is anonymous. However, we do ask you to supply us with some basic demographic details so that we can describe the kinds of individuals who participated in the study.

Q6 What is your age?

Q8 What is your gender?

○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)

Q10 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

○ Some high school or less (1)
○ High school diploma or equivalent (2)
○ Some college (3)
○ College diploma (4)
○ Some graduate/professional school (5)
○ Graduate/professional degree (6)

Q12 What is your marital status? Select all that currently apply.

❑ Single (1)
❑ Dating a number of people (2)
❑ Dating one person (3)
❑ Married (4)
❑ Divorced (5)
❑ Widowed (6)
❑ Cohabiting (living with a partner as a couple, but not married) (7)
❑ Engaged (8)

Q14 Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

Q16 Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

○ African American (1)
○ Hispanic (2)
○ European (3)
○ European American (4)
○ Asian American (5)
○ Native American (6)
○ South Indian /Indian subcontinent (7)
○ Mixed, multi-racial; please specify (8) _____
○ Other; please specify (9) _____

Q18 In which country were you born?

○ United States of America (1)
○ Other; please specify (2) _____

Q20 What is the primary language you speak fluently?

○ English (1)
○ Other; please specify (2) _____

Q22 Please rate your fluency in the English language

○ Poor (1)
○   (2)
○   (3)
○ Good (4)
○   (5)
○   (6)
○ Excellent (7)

Q24 What is your total household income? In US dollars if possible, but you may write in non-US currencies if you don't know the dollar equivalent

- ❑ $10,000 or less (1)
- ❑ $10,001 - $20,000 (2)
- ❑ $20,001 - $30,000 (3)
- ❑ $30,001 $40,000 (4)
- ❑ $40,001 - $50,000 (5)
- ❑ $50,001 - $60,000 (6)
- ❑ $60,001 - $70,000 (7)
- ❑ $70,001 - $80,000 (8)
- ❑ $80,001 - $90,000 (9)
- ❑ $90,001 - $100,000 (10)
- ❑ $100,001 - $130,000 (11)
- ❑ More than $130,000 (12)
- ❑ Enter currency if not USD (13) _____

Q26 What is your height in feet and inches?

Q28 What is your weight in pounds?

Q30 Do you currently have a meditation practice?

- ○ No (1)
- ○ Yes, less than 1 hour per week (2)
- ○ Yes, 1-2 hours per week (3)
- ○ Yes, 2-3 hours per week (4)
- ○ Yes, 3-4 hours per week (5)
- ○ Yes, 4-5 hours per week (6)
- ○ Yes, more than 5 hours per week (7)

Q32 For how long have you been practicing meditation?

❍ Less than 6 months (1)
❍ 6-12 months (2)
❍ 1-2 years (3)
❍ 2-5 years (4)
❍ 5-10 years (5)
❍ 10-15 years (6)
❍ 15-20 years (7)
❍ More than 20 years (8)

Q34 Please describe the kind of meditation you practice

Appendix C
Personal Strivings Measure (PSM)

Q36 In this part of the questionnaire, we would like you to describe some of your personal strivings. You can think of personal strivings as the goals that you typically try to obtain in your life. For example, two strivings might be: "Trying to be physically attractive," or "Trying to seek new and exciting experiences." Spend a few minutes thinking about your goals as personal strivings, then enter them in the space provided. Try not to make them too specific (e.g., I will clean the car today) but a little more general like the examples given above. For each striving that you list, please answer the seven questions that follow.

Q38 Personal Striving #1. Please write your personal striving here

Q40 This striving is important to me

❍ Disagree Strongly (1)
❍ Disagree Moderately (2)
❍ Disagree Slightly (3)
❍ Agree Slightly (4)
❍ Agree Moderately (5)
❍ Agree Strongly (6)

Q42 In the past 10 weeks I have made progress on this striving

❍ Disagree Strongly (1)
❍ Disagree Moderately (2)
❍ Disagree Slightly (3)
❍ Agree Slightly (4)
❍ Agree Moderately (5)
❍ Agree Strongly (6)

Q44 I strive for this because someone else wants me to do it, or because I'll get something from somebody if I do it. That is, I probably would not strive for this if I didn't get some kind of reward, praise, or approval out of it

❍ Disagree Strongly (1)
❍ Disagree Moderately (2)
❍ Disagree Slightly (3)
❍ Agree Slightly (4)
❍ Agree Moderately (5)
❍ Agree Strongly (6)

Q46 I strive for this because I would feel ashamed, guilty or anxious if I didn't strive for it

- ○ Disagree Strongly (1)
- ○ Disagree Moderately (2)
- ○ Disagree Slightly (3)
- ○ Agree Slightly (4)
- ○ Agree Moderately (5)
- ○ Agree Strongly (6)

Q48 I strive for this because I believe it is an important goal to have. Although this goal may once have been taught by others, now I endorse it freely and value it wholeheartedly

- ○ Disagree Strongly (1)
- ○ Disagree Moderately (2)
- ○ Disagree Slightly (3)
- ○ Agree Slightly (4)
- ○ Agree Moderately (5)
- ○ Agree Strongly (6)

Q50 I strive for this because it makes my life more meaningful

- ○ Disagree Strongly (1)
- ○ Disagree Moderately (2)
- ○ Disagree Slightly (3)
- ○ Agree Slightly (4)
- ○ Agree Moderately (5)
- ○ Agree Strongly (6)

Q52 I strive for this because of the fun and enjoyment that the goal provides for me

- ○ Disagree Strongly (1)
- ○ Disagree Moderately (2)
- ○ Disagree Slightly (3)
- ○ Agree Slightly (4)
- ○ Agree Moderately (5)
- ○ Agree Strongly (6)
- ○

EACH PARTICIPANT WAS PROVIDED SPACE TO PROVIDE 4 PERSONAL STRIVINGS -SAME WORDING AS ABOVE

Appendix D
Goal-content Coding System

Coding summary sheet

General points
• If you think the striving may be fake/person is not taking question seriously then mark with a '1' in the 'invalid' column. If you are uncertain complete the ratings as normal but in addition mark a '1' in the 'invalid' column to indicate that you are unsure
• If the same participant documents the same striving more than one (i.e. two or more of the strivings are identical or extremely close) then rate the first one only and score any additional ones as 'invalid'
• If the participant documents multiple different strivings within each space take the first striving and rate that ignoring the rest
Step 1.
• Rate whether the striving can be classified as approach or avoidance
• If you are unsure of your rating mark an '1' in the unsure column
Approach (App) or Avoidance (Avoid)
• Does the striving refer to something positive or negative?
• Does the person wish to approach, obtain, achieve or keep the object of the striving or do they wish to avoid, prevent, or get rid of the object of the striving?
• Is the person trying "not to do something"? (Usually the words "avoid" "not" or "don't" will give it away).
Step 2.
• Rate whether the striving can be classified primarily as referring to oneself or others
• If you are unsure of your rating mark an '1' in the 'unsure' column
Self (Intra) or Others (inter)
• Does the striving refer to oneself or to others? Is there reference to the self or reference to others?
• Is the striving mainly about oneself or mainly about others?
• Is the object of the striving oneself or other people?
• Does the striving refer to one's emotional state (intra-) or the expression of emotion (inter-)?
Step 3. Motive categories
• Choose the most appropriate motive category out of the 4 listed (achievement, affiliation, intimacy or power)
• It is possible that more than one motive category may be applicable but this will be rare. If you do select more than one motive category then also put a '1' in the 'unsure' column
• If you feel that the striving really does not fit into any of the 4 motive categories than put a '1' in the 'unsure column'-this should also be very rare

Achievement (Achi)	**Affiliation (Affil)**
• Reference to achieving or accomplishing a goal. • Competing with a standard of excellence. • Concern with competition, doing a task well, doing better than one has done before. • Reference to performance or winning • Concern with success or accomplishment • Trying hard to do something; expending effort.	• Concern for or desire to establish, maintain, or repair interpersonal relations. • Concern with seeking approval and acceptance from others. • Making efforts to win friends, an active striving toward friends. • Concern with preventing loneliness and rejection. • Concern with social acceptance and security in interpersonal relations. • Striving that emphasize an active need to be with others, making friends, having others like the person

Intimacy (Intim)	Power (Pow)
- Commitment and concern for another person. - Interpersonal relations involving positive affect: Love, friendship, happiness, peace, or tender behaviours. - Concern with experiencing a warm, close, and communicative exchange with another person. - Concern with loyalty and responsibility toward others. - Helping others; reciprocal communication and sharing. - Strivings that emphasize enjoying being with others, focusing more on the quality of relationships rather than quantity	- Concern about establishing, maintaining, or restoring power. - Concern with having impact, control, or influence over others. - Dominating, influencing, persuading, or convincing others. - Seeking fame or public attention (versus success itself). - Concern for reputation or position - Comparison and/or competition with others. - Influencing, controlling, or arousing emotions in others. - Giving help, assistance, or support when none is asked for.

Step 4.

- Mark with a '1' if any of the remaining 6 categories apply to the specified striving. You can rate more than one category here if they seem clearly applicable (rating none is fine if they do not apply)
- If the striving seems valid but does not seem to fit into any of the 4 motive categories *or* the 6 categories listed below then put a '1' in the ''other' column

Personal Growth and Health (G & H)	Self-Presentation (Self Pres)
- Improving, maintaining, or enhancing self-esteem. - Goals related to personal well-being, whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. - Concern with being happier, or avoiding unhappiness, stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions. - Concern with improving or maintaining one's health; avoiding illness. - Concern with improving aspects of the self: characterological changes.	- Concern with making a favourable impression on others. - Desiring to appear socially and/or physically attractive to others. - Concern with appearing intelligent, interesting, desirable - Concern with changing, maintaining, or improving one's image to others. - Concern with portraying a certain emotional state.
Maladaptive (Maladapt)	**Independence (Indepen)**
- These are strivings that reflect a lack of growth or adaptiveness. - A desire to avoid taking chances or accepting challenges that could result in positive growth or change. - Strivings that appear to be antithetical to those in Category 7 (Personal Growth and Health).	- Concern with being an individual, separated, autonomous from others. - Concern with seeking, establishing, or maintaining independence. - Avoiding being dependent or going along with the group. - Doing what one thinks is right. - Not having to depend on others. - Concern with asserting oneself.

Generative (Gen)	Spiritual/self-transcendence (Spirit)
• This category refers to strivings which relate to a goal of providing for the next generation, a desire for symbolic immortality, a desire to be needed by others, belief in the fundamental goodness of human life, and of the self. The expression of generativity in strivings can take the form of the following categories: 1. References to creating something, or having the desire to do so. 2. Giving of one's self to others - tangible or intangible - or the desire to do so 3. Reference to purposeful and positive interaction with the younger generation	• Spirituality is the process by which persons affirm a non-material reality that is beyond or is larger than themselves and attempt to align their lives with that reality. Spiritual, self-transcendent strivings thus refer to goals that are oriented above and beyond the self. They reflect a commitment to concerns that are larger than the individual. To transcend the self means to extend outward, toward others (horizontal transcendence) and/or to an ultimate reality (vertical transcendence). The expression of self-transcendence in strivings can take many forms, including but not limited to the following three dimensions: 1. **Divine awareness:** Strivings that involve an acknowledgement of and a desire to relate to a higher power, or to gain knowledge of that higher power. 2. **Universal equality:** Strivings that reflect social responsibility and a sense of equity-- keeping promises, meeting obligations, conforming to social and moral rules, promoting fairness, justice, reciprocity, or equality, avoiding unfair or unjust actions. This criteria is included because of the importance of these concerns in virtually all of the major world religions. 3. **Oneness/Unity:** Strivings that reflect an integration of the individual with larger and more complex units: with other cultures, with humanity as a whole, with the natural landscape

Appendix E
The Nonattachment Scale (NAS)

Approach to Life Questionnaire

To help us understand your general approach to life and your views about yourself, others, and life in general, tell us the extent to which the following statements reflect your experiences at this point in your life. Select a number from 1 to 6 on the scale provided with each statement to rate the extent to which you agree with it.

Please answer according to what *really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree Strongly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Slightly	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Strongly

1. I can accept the flow of events in my life without hanging onto them or pushing them away.
2. I can let go of regrets and feelings of dissatisfaction about the past.
3. I find I can be calm and/or happy even if things are not going my way.
4. I have a hard time appreciating others' successes when they outperform me.
5. I can remain open to what life offers me regardless of whether it seems desirable or undesirable at a particular time.
6. I can enjoy pleasant experiences without needing them to last forever.
7. I view the problems that enter my life as things/issues to work on rather than reasons for becoming disheartened or demoralized.
8. I can enjoy my possessions without being upset when they are damaged or destroyed.
9. The amount of money I have is not important to my sense of who I am.
10. I do not go out of my way to cover up or deny my negative qualities or mistakes.
11. I accept my flaws.
12. I can enjoy my family and friends without feeling I need to hang on to them.
13. If things aren't turning out the way I want, I get upset.
14. I can enjoy the pleasures of life without feeling sad or frustrated when they end.
15. I can take joy in others' achievements without feeling envious.
16. I find I can be happy almost regardless of what is going on in my life.
17. Instead of avoiding or denying life's difficulties, I face up to them.
18. I am open to reflecting on my past mistakes and failings.
19. I do not get "hung up" on wanting an "ideal" or "perfect" life.
20. I am comfortable being an ordinary, less than perfect human being.
21. I can remain open to thoughts and feelings that come into my mind, even if they are negative or painful.
22. I can see my own problems and shortcomings without trying to blame them on someone or something outside myself.
23. When pleasant experiences end, I am fine moving on to what comes next.
24. I am often preoccupied by threats or fears.

25. I am not possessive of the people I love.
26. I do not have to hang on to the people I love at all costs; I can let them go if they wish to go.
27. I do not feel I need to escape or avoid bad experiences in my life.
28. I can admit my shortcomings without shame or embarrassment.
29. I experience and acknowledge grief following significant losses, but do not become overwhelmed, devastated, or incapable of meeting life's other demands.
30. I am not possessive of the things I own.

Scoring of the NAS: After reverse scoring items 4, 13 and 24 (e.g., by subtracting their scores from 7), compute the mean of 30 items using the reversed scores of the 3 items.

Appendix F
SPSS Output

Nonattachment Scale Reliability

Non attachment scale

Reliability Statistics

Imputation Number	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
1	.926	30
2	.926	30
3	.925	30
4	.924	30
5	.925	30
6	.925	30
7	.923	30
8	.924	30
9	.924	30
10	.923	30
11	.924	30
12	.926	30
13	.925	30
14	.926	30
15	.924	30
16	.924	30
17	.925	30
18	.923	30
19	.926	30
20	.926	30
21	.923	30
22	.923	30
23	.927	30
24	.926	30
25	.923	30

Descriptives of Demographic Data

Statistics: Age, gender, and income

Imputation Number: Original data

		What is your age?	What is your gender?	income
N	Valid	7884	7884	7812
	Missing	154	154	226
Mean		49.03	1.52	6.0658

What is your gender?

Imputation Number: Original data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	3748	46.6	47.5	47.5
Valid	Female	4136	51.5	52.5	100.0
	Total	7884	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	154	1.9		
Total		8038	100.0		

Income

Imputation Number: Original data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	529	6.6	6.8	6.8
	2.00	623	7.8	8.0	14.7
	3.00	923	11.5	11.8	26.6
	4.00	995	12.4	12.7	39.3
	5.00	774	9.6	9.9	49.2
	6.00	768	9.6	9.8	59.0
Valid	7.00	631	7.9	8.1	67.1
	8.00	538	6.7	6.9	74.0
	9.00	383	4.8	4.9	78.9
	10.00	472	5.9	6.0	84.9
	11.00	616	7.7	7.9	92.8
	12.00	560	7.0	7.2	100.0
	Total	7812	97.2	100.0	
Missing	System	226	2.8		
Total		8038	100.0		

Descriptives of Non-Attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

Descriptive Statistics

Imputation Number: Pooled

	N	Mean		Fraction Missing Info.	Relative Increase Variance	Relative Efficiency
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Nonattachment	7884	4.3716	.00913	.287	.394	.989
strivingprogress	7884	4.3272	.01582	.467	.843	.982
strivingimport	5716	5.4914	.00875	.000	.000	1.000
authstrive	7884	4.9161	.01044	.309	.436	.988
controlstrive	7884	2.9675	.01642	.276	.373	.989
avoid	5759	1.1201	.00255	.000	.000	1.000
Valid N (listwise)	5681					

Bivariate Correlations of Non-Attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

Correlations

Imputation Number: Pooled

		Nonattachment	strivingprogress	strivingimport	authstrive	controlstrive	avoid
Nonattachment	Pearson Correlation	1	.317**	.253**	.285**	-.199**	-.098**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	7884	7884	5716	7884	7884	5685
strivingprogress	Pearson Correlation	.317**	1	.324**	.492**	.099**	-.193**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	7884	7884	5716	7884	7884	5685
strivingimport	Pearson Correlation	.253**	.324**	1	.591**	-.107**	-.044**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
	N	5716	5716	5716	5716	5716	5681
authstrive	Pearson Correlation	.285**	.492**	.591**	1	.067**	-.166**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	7884	7884	5716	7884	7884	5685
controlstrive	Pearson Correlation	-.199**	.099**	-.107**	.067**	1	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.216
	N	7884	7884	5716	7884	7884	5685
avoid	Pearson Correlation	-.098**	-.193**	-.044**	-.166**	.017	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.216	
	N	5685	5685	5681	5685	5685	5759

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Bivariate Correlations of Non-Attachment and Goal-content

Correlations

Imputation Number: Pooled

		Nonattachment	spiritual	relationship	achieve	ghealth	generate	presentation
Nonattachment	Pearson Correlation	1	.100**	.042**	-.062**	-.048**	.061**	-.041**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.004	.000	.001	.000	.007
	N	7884	5622	5696	5696	5619	5622	5622
spiritual	Pearson Correlation	.100**	1	.117**	-.135**	-.427**	.013	-.064**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.343	.000
	N	5622	5696	5691	5691	5693	5696	5696
relationship	Pearson Correlation	.042**	.117**	1	-.926**	-.222**	.301**	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000		.000	.000	.000	.872
	N	5696	5691	5770	5770	5688	5691	5691
achieve	Pearson Correlation	-.062**	-.135**	-.926**	1	.320**	-.384**	-.065**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	5696	5691	5770	5770	5688	5691	5691
ghealth	Pearson Correlation	-.048**	-.427**	-.222**	.320**	1	-.490**	-.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	5619	5693	5688	5688	5693	5693	5693
generate	Pearson Correlation	.061**	.013	.301**	-.384**	-.490**	1	-.093**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.343	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	5622	5696	5691	5691	5693	5696	5696
presentation	Pearson Correlation	-.041**	-.064**	-.002	-.065**	-.282**	-.093**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000	.872	.000	.000	.000	
	N	5622	5696	5691	5691	5693	5696	5696

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Gender-split Descriptives of Non-attachment and Main Striving Characteristics

Descriptive Statistics

Imputation Number: Pooled

What is your gender?		N	Mean		Fraction Missing Info.	Relative Increase Variance	Relative Efficiency
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Male	Nonattachment	3748	4.3676	.01277	.252	.330	.990
	strivingprogress	3748	4.3481	.02136	.383	.602	.985
	strivingimport	2626	5.3707	.01475	.000	.000	1.000
	authstrive	3748	4.8515	.01529	.297	.412	.988
	controlstrive	3748	3.1691	.02362	.245	.317	.990
	avoid	2603	1.1044	.00365	.000	.000	1.000
	Valid N (listwise)	2599					
Female	Nonattachment	4136	4.3752	.01223	.223	.282	.991
	strivingprogress	4136	4.3082	.01957	.329	.478	.987
	strivingimport	3090	5.5941	.00986	.000	.000	1.000
	authstrive	4136	4.9746	.01374	.271	.364	.989
	controlstrive	4136	2.7848	.02134	.237	.305	.991
	avoid	3082	1.1338	.00355	.000	.000	1.000
	Valid N (listwise)	3082					