

SMALL WORKS
BY SARAH LAZAROVIC

Enough is Enough

What are you willing to give up?

We live in a society that fetishizes and incentivizes the pursuit of more.



So embedded is this idea that it's hard to see it for what it is: a recipe for perpetual dissatisfaction.



For too many in the Western world, "enough" is a foreign concept, the purview of chumps and ascetics. Anything less than maximalist opulence feels stingy.



Surrounded by forces of marketing and capitalism, it takes perspective to see the system for what it is and say: I've had enough, I am enough.



But there's a satisfaction in having "just enough," avoiding waste while maintaining comfort. The Swedes call it *lagom*, or "just the right amount." It's a Nordic twist on the Goldilocks principle.

How is it?
It is... Suitable.



Lots of languages and cultures have words for this perfect quality of enoughness. While the Turkish word *tamam* talks about the precision of the right amount, the Finnish word *sopivasti* translates to "just right."



So small you may crave a bit more, but in a nice way.



A perfectly satisfying but not excessive quantity.



For days when you've slept poorly and need to over-compensate.



A needlessly large amount that will defeat you in the end.

Perhaps one failing is that we have no single English word to succinctly, positively, and satisfyingly describe the idea of just right. "Sufficient" makes enough sound drab, when it should feel satiatingly great.

Adequate.



It was profoundly satisfactory.

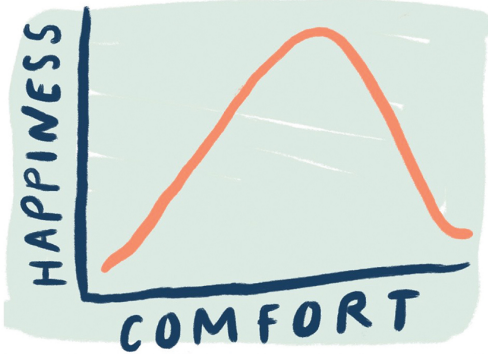
nice.



I'll order something that is just a little less than too much.



"One of the greatest paradoxes in American life is that while, on average, existence has gotten more comfortable over time, happiness has fallen," wrote Arthur C. Brooks in *The Atlantic*.



The U.S. General Social Survey has tracked a gradual decline in happiness since 1988. This, despite the fact that household income, adjusted for inflation, "was higher in 2019 than has ever been recorded for every quintile."

Brooks synthesized hundreds of years of academic literature on the topic of consumption and material comfort not leading to happiness: Remember that material prosperity has both benefits and costs. The costs come when we allow our hunger for the fruits of prosperity to blind us to the timeless sources of true human happiness: faith, family, friendship, and work in which we earn our success and serve others.



Of course, this is a societal problem. For many, a foundational scarcity has created our propensity for consumption. For others, "too much" fills other voids.



There's no escaping the injustice of a world where, increasingly, many have way too little and some have way too much. At the macro level, this too-muchness of some is destroying the possibility of just enough for others.



As many cultures already know, having "just enough" can be freeing and gratifying. So how do we rebrand it as such? How do we see the abundance of enoughness, the love in knowing everyone can have enough?



How do we normalize the idea that more is not better?



One way is to simply bake these questions into our lives, layering them into our decision making: How can everyone have enough? What am I willing to give up?



Once we do that, we realize that most of the time, we already have what we need.



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