

SUCKS TO BE US

(the human obsession with happiness)



ERROR

LOW BATTERY



KOBUS VELDSMAN

Sucks to be Us

(The Human Obsession with Happiness)

Introduction: The Warranty has Expired

Congratulations. If you are reading this, you are currently in possession of the most advanced piece of hardware in the known universe: the **Human Brain**.

It is a triple-core, bio-electric supercomputer capable of landing robots on Mars, composing symphonies, and remembering exactly what that one person said to you in third grade that made you feel slightly awkward.

There is just one problem.

Your brain was not designed for your life. It was designed for a world where the most exciting thing that happened all year was "Grog found a slightly fermented mango" or "The tribe didn't get eaten by a giant cat today."

We are running a 50,000-year-old operating system on 2026 hardware. It's like trying to run *Cyberpunk 2077* on a calculator powered by a potato. It "works," but the fan is screaming and every five minutes the system is convinced you're about to die because it saw a low battery icon.

The Happiness Glitch

Somewhere along the line, evolution decided to give us a little feature called "**Happiness**." It wasn't a gift. It was a bribe.

Evolution realized that if we were just "fine" all the time, we'd stop doing the hard stuff. We'd stop hunting, stop gathering, and definitely stop trying to figure out if we could sharpen a rock well enough to shave a mammoth. So, it gave us **Dopamine** – the "Carrot on a Stick."

But because Evolution is a cynical, budget-cutting engineer, it made sure the "Happiness" wears off in about eleven seconds. If you stayed happy after finding a berry bush, you'd sit there until a sabretooth ate you. So, the brain resets the counter to zero. It tells you, "That berry was okay... but I bet the berries on the *other* side of the mountain are life-changing."

And off you go. Again. Forever.

The "Hold My Beer" Species

This book is a deep dive into why we are the way we are. We are a species defined by **Boredom** – the internal alarm that goes off when we aren't being chased by something. Boredom is why we have the International Space Station, and it's why your neighbour decided to see if he could clear the hedges with a lawnmower and a ramp.

We are going to look at:

- Why your "Anxiety" is just a very confused bodyguard.
- Why you secretly want your friends to succeed, but "not too much."
- Why "Self-Help" is usually just people selling you a different-coloured carrot.

By the end of this, you won't be "Fixed." You can't fix a biological glitch. But you will be able to look at your own neurotic, status-chasing, mammoth-hoarding brain, give it a metaphorical pat on the head, and say:

"Sucks to be Us."

And then, you might actually be able to finish your drink in peace.

Sucks to be Us Rule #0:

Your brain isn't broken — it's just running software that predates electricity.

Chapter 1: The Dopamine Carrot (Or: Why the Pizza Always Lies)

The first thing you have to understand about being human is that your brain is a pathological liar. Specifically, it lies about the **Future**.

Have you ever been so hungry that you'd trade your firstborn for a slice of pizza? Your brain tells you, *"Once we get that pizza, we will be complete. We will reach a state of transcendental dough-based Nirvana. We will never want for anything again."*

Then you eat the pizza. For six minutes, life is glorious.

Minute seven? You're looking at the empty box, feeling slightly greasy, and wondering if you should buy a new pair of shoes online to fill the sudden, gaping void in your soul.

The "Sucks to be Us" Insight: Your brain didn't want you to *have* the pizza. It wanted you to *want* the pizza. "Wanting" is what keeps an ape alive in the wild. "Having" is a biological dead end.

We are designed to be perpetually dissatisfied. Contentment is a terrible survival strategy.

Sucks to be Us Rule #1:

Your brain doesn't want satisfaction; it wants pursuit — and it will lie about the difference.

Chapter 2: The Boredom Defence Mechanism (Or: Why Grandma Had to Dance)

If Anxiety is the brain's "Check Engine" light, then **Boredom** is the "Self-Destruct" timer.

In the wild, a bored animal is a dead animal. Evolution hated the idea of a human sitting still for too long. If you weren't looking for food, sharpening a stick, or scanning the horizon for things with teeth, you were essentially a waste of calories.

So, nature installed a high-decibel internal screaming match that triggers whenever nothing is happening. We call it Boredom. It is the most dangerous force in human history.

The "Hot Coal" Incident

Imagine our ancestors. It's a rainy Tuesday in the Pleistocene. The mammoths are elsewhere. The berries are picked. The cave is as clean as a hole in a rock can be.

Normal animals would just nap. Not us. The "Boredom Alarm" starts blaring.

Brain: *"Psst. Hey. It's quiet. Too quiet. We should be doing something."*

Human: *"Like what? We've eaten. The fire is going. We're safe."*

Brain: *"Safe is just another word for 'Not Currently Being Chased.' Look at Grandma over there, sleeping. I wonder if she's fireproof?"*

Somewhere along the line, a bored ancestor – let's call him Grog – looked at the glowing red embers of the fire and then at Grandma's feet. Not because he was evil, but because his brain was so desperate for a "Dopamine Hit" of novelty that it overrode his "Don't Be a Jerk" instinct.

He puts a hot coal between Grandma's toes. Grandma leaps up, performing a frantic, high-stepping jig that bears a striking resemblance to a dodo trying to take flight.

The tribe watches. They laugh.

The Result: A new neural pathway formed. We learned we could manufacture entertainment by messing with physics or dignity.

The "Hold My Beer" Legacy

This is the origin story of everything that makes us "Us."

- **Agriculture:** "I'm tired of walking for food. What if I force the grass to grow *here*?"
- **Space Travel:** "I'm tired of this planet. What if I sit on a giant tube of explosives and see if I can hit that big white rock in the sky?"
- **The Internet:** "I have access to the sum of all human knowledge, but I'd really like to see a video of a cat wearing a shark costume on a Roomba."

The "Sucks to be Us" Insight

It sucks to be us because we can never just *be*. We are the only species that will intentionally ruin a perfectly good afternoon just to see what happens when... We invent problems because our brains are bored of our solutions.

We built a world of comfort, and then we got so bored of the comfort that we invented **Horror Movies** and **Spicy Noodle Challenges** just to feel the "Survival Panic" our ancestors spent their lives trying to escape.

Sucks to be us Rule #2:

Boredom isn't a flaw — it's unused survival energy looking for trouble.

Chapter 3: The "Relative Success" Trap (Or: My Neighbor's Goat is a Jerk)

You've finally done it. You've moved out of the cave. You have a hut with a thatched roof and a solid mud floor. You are the King of the Valley. You sit on your rock, basking in the glow of your own success.

Then, Grog (yes, the hot-coal guy) builds a hut with **two** windows.

Suddenly, your thatched roof feels like trash. Your mud floor feels like failure. Your rock is too lumpy.

The Biological Glitch: Your brain doesn't have a "Success" setting. It has no idea if you're winning – only whether someone else appears to be winning harder. Your run of the mill "Comparison" setting. In the wild, being "The Best" meant you got the best food and the most attractive mates. Being "Second Best" meant you got the scraps and the mate with the weird cough.

So, Evolution made sure that your happiness is tied directly to how you're doing compared to the guy next to you.

The Modern Version: In 2026, the "Valley" isn't just your neighbourhood. Thanks to the glowing glass rectangle in your pocket, your "neighbour" is now a 22-year-old fitness influencer in Bali with six-pack abs and a yacht.

Your brain looks at the influencer and says: *"Alert! Grog has a much better cave! Our cave is a disgrace! We are losing the mating game! Panic! Release the Stress Cortisol!"*

The "Sucks to be Us" Insight: We are the only animals that can be perfectly healthy, wealthy, and safe, yet feel like total failures because a stranger on a screen has a more aesthetic avocado toast than we do.

Sucks to be Us Rule #3:

You're never unhappy because you're losing — only because someone nearby looks like they're winning.

Chapter 4: The Modern Happiness Industry (Or: Paying for the Carrot)

We have reached a peak in human history where we are so good at surviving that we've had to turn "not being miserable" into a trillion-dollar industry.

Back in the day, if you were sad, it was usually because a wolf was eating your leg or you hadn't seen a carbohydrate in three weeks. The solution was simple: Remove the wolf. Find a tuber.

But today? We have removed the wolves. We are surrounded by tubers (mostly in the form of artisanal potato chips). Yet, the "Unhappy Alarm" is still screaming. Why? Because the Industry realized that **Contentment is bad for the economy.**

The Optimization Trap

The Modern Happiness Industry is like a guy selling you a map to a place that doesn't exist. They tell you that you aren't happy because you haven't "optimized" your life yet.

You need a **Mindfulness App** to teach you how to sit still. You need a **Bio-Hacking Kit** to track your sleep, so you can wake up at 4:00 AM to look at a "Sunlight Lamp" before retiring to your cubicle. **Self-Help Books** that tell you to "Manifest your Destiny," fancy way of chasing the carrot even harder.

The "Hold My Beer" Moment: CrossFit and Cold Plunges

Nothing sums up the "Sucks to be Us" reality better than the **Cold Plunge**.

Our ancestors spent thousands of years inventing fire, wool coats, and central heating specifically so they would *never have to be cold again*. They would look at us today – people who pay \$50 a month to sit in a tub of ice water while a guy named Chad screams about "mental toughness" – and they would think we'd lost our minds.

We have reached a level of comfort so profound that we have to **simulate suffering** just to get a hit of dopamine. We pay to lift heavy rocks in a warehouse (CrossFit) because our brains are confused that we didn't have to carry a dead deer home today.

The "Sucks to be Us" Insight: We are the only species that builds a climate-controlled paradise and then feels so guilty about it that we go back to the "ice tub" to feel alive. We're paying for the panic our ancestors got for free.

Sucks to be Us Rule #4:

If contentment were profitable, no one would be selling you a cure for it.

Chapter 5: Seeing the Matrix (The "Sucks to be Us" Enlightenment)

This is the part where you get to put the book down, look at the guy in the next lounge chair, and feel a deep, soul-soothing sense of... nothing.

Throughout this book, we've established that you are a neurotic, bored, comparison-obsessed ape running outdated software. And that is the best news you've ever heard.

Why Contentment is the Ultimate Cheat Code

Most people spend their lives trying to "fix" the glitch. They think if they just get the right job or the right spouse, the internal screaming will stop.

It won't. The screaming is a factory setting.

Once you realize the "Happiness Carrot" is a lie, you can stop running. You can look at your brain's "Survival Panic" when your phone battery hits 10% and say, *"Ah, I see you, little caveman. You think the darkness is coming. It's okay. We have a charger in the bag."*

The "Sucks to be Us" Secret Handshake

The moment you see the Matrix, the world changes.

- When your neighbour gets a new car, you don't feel jealous. You feel bad for him because he just signed up for a 60-month "Dopamine Mortgage."
- When you feel bored, you don't panic and scroll through social media. You realize your brain is just asking for a "hot coal" moment, and you decide to just let it scream for a bit while you watch a bird.

The Final Verdict

We are a ridiculous species. We are the dodo-dancing, ice-bath-taking, pizza-regretting glitch in the universe's plan. We were never meant to be "Happy" in the way the commercials tell us. We were meant to be curious, jumpy, and slightly annoyed at Grog.

Being **Content** isn't about having everything. It's about realizing that having "everything" would be boring anyway.

So, the next time you feel that familiar itch of "I need more," or the sudden urge to see if you can make a flamethrower out of a can of hairspray, just take a breath. Smile at the absurdity of it all.

Sucks to be Us. Pass the sunscreen.

Sucks to be Us Rule #5:

You don't escape the glitch by fixing it — you escape it by recognizing it.

Written by Kobus Veldsman

© 2026 **WorldOffGrid Publishing**. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher, except for brief quotations used in reviews or scholarly commentary.

www.worldoffgrid.com

