Mike Tyson is one of the greatest boxers of all time. Over his career, “Iron Mike” had 50 wins, including 44 knockouts, and only six losses. Coming from a difficult childhood, during which he was surrounded by crime and poverty, he escaped his circumstances through a laserlike focus on his dream of athletic greatness. And he realized that dream by becoming the world heavyweight champion at the age of 20, in 1986.

Despite his success and fame, Tyson was dogged by crises, failed relationships, and legal troubles, including allegations of domestic violence and nearly three years in prison in the 1990s after he was convicted on a charge of rape. He achieved all his ambitions of riches and renown, but a happy life seemed to elude him.

This might seem ironic or contradictory to some. To Tyson, however, it was neither. “You almost have to give your happiness up to accomplish your goals,” he reflected in a 2020 interview.

That is what we might call the Tyson Paradox. Building a good life requires us to have goals that keep us focused, enthusiastic, and out of trouble. But actually attaining those goals might not give us the payoff we imagined, and could in fact bring us misery. Although most of us will never see the highs and lows that Mike Tyson experienced, we can all easily fall into our own version of the same trap.