

Release the Lack That You Feel, and Reach Your Full Potential

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago, I was working and living in a small, inexpensive city. At the time, I was renting a huge two-bedroom apartment that cost around \$700 a month. I went out to dinner a few times a week, had lots of cable television channels, and drove a brand-new BMW. I was making less than \$50,000 a year, but I made enough to live well. I was paying off student loans and supporting my girlfriend.

I knew another guy about my age who had a **job making** the same amount I did, and he lived close to me. Instead of living in a nice apartment, driving a new car, and so forth, he lived much differently. He rented a 300-square-foot room, with a very small bathroom and kitchen. He washed his dishes in his bathtub. He was paying around \$200 a month for this privilege. It was not a nice place.

Moreover, he did not have a car. Instead, he walked everywhere to save money. When we went out to eat, if he ordered anything, he always ordered the cheapest thing on the menu. If we went out to a bar or club on the weekend, he would often smuggle in his own cans of beer.

He did not really go out on dates too much because he believed they cost too much. He went over to other people's houses to watch television a lot because he was too frugal to buy various cable channels. Most of the food he ate was canned and very cheap.

That was a long time ago . . . more than a decade ago. You know what? This guy is still living in a very similar way—but in a different city. He is still living in a small apartment, still walking to work, still counting his pennies, and still being very cheap all around.

Why? Because he sees lack everywhere: When he got his job paying close to \$50,000 a year, he felt as if he had hit the lottery. He had to save every penny and make sure that he did not risk anything at all because he might never be so lucky again. He felt that his world could come crashing down at any moment.

Given this man's mind-set, would it surprise you to know that he is living way below his potential in just about every conceivable way?

In principle, I do not think there is anything wrong whatsoever with being a miser. The problem, however, is that this line of thinking tends to migrate into just about every area of your life. If you believe the **world lacks opportunity**, for example, you will act in a self-defeating manner in your work and other things you do. Because you see the world as lacking, the service you provide to an employer will be based on lack as well. You will rarely do more or give more of yourself than you believe you should. You will subtly transmit your sense of lack in the world to everything you do.

I remember that in this man's job, he was just about as calculating with his time and with his service as he was with his money outside of work. He would never work a minute later than he was expected to. He would never show up a minute earlier than he needed to. He would never, ever do more than he was asked. He wanted to make sure that his employer did not get more value from him than they were "paying for."

When discussing his job, he could tell you with precise detail the value of his health insurance, how much he was making per hour (even though he was on salary), and so forth. He was never thinking about getting a raise, for example. His main concern was protecting just what he had.

As a consequence of this attitude, this guy's life never changed. When his supervisors and others looked around for people to promote, he was never the sort of person they wanted. Why? Because he never gave more than was expected of him. In fact, everything he did was from the expectation that the world was a place of lack. He saw lack in the world around him, so the work he did was also lacking.

Would it surprise you to know that—as far as I know--this guy has never been given a raise and has lost several jobs? He has been out of work a lot. His mind-set of being so cheap was inappropriate and has created a self-fulfilling legacy in his life where his constant saving, penny-pinching, and so forth has been necessary for his survival. When you look at the world with the idea that it does not have many opportunities, this is exactly what you end up getting.

There is more to the idea of "lack" than even what occurred above. If a sense of lack dominates your thinking, there will be literally millions of ways you act subconsciously (and consciously) that will affect your interaction with the world and how the world sees you. For example, you may be a very stingy tipper in restaurants. People close to you will see this and they, in turn, may adjust their behavior to be stingy with you in emotional ways.

The concept of "lack" is one of the more fascinating issues we confront in our personal and public lives. A fundamental problem that most people have is that they approach the world as a place of lack. In the eyes of many people, the world lacks

- **Jobs**
- People to socialize with
- Opportunities
- Money
- Success

I could go on and on about the lack that most people believe exists in the world. The amount of lack that people see out there is profound and it has a massive impact on their lives. You might as well understand this right now: *The most successful people in the world see the world as a place of opportunity and not lack. The happiest people in the world see the world as a*

place of opportunity and not lack.

Many people sit around and think about the things they would like to have: the people they want to be close to, the opportunities they feel they should take for themselves, the money they would like to make. What happens when you are constantly thinking about what you want is, you create a sense of lack in your life, and when you feel lack, you generally manifest lack in your life.

What very few people understand is that how you view the world ends up being the world you create for yourself. It is like this with lack. Have you ever known someone who seems to instantly like everyone and think that everyone they meet is the nicest and coolest person in the world? I have known several people like this. It is very hard for other people to dislike people like this. In fact, the people I have known like this seem to be liked by everyone they meet and spend time with. People who like others are liked back. Liking other people around them ends up setting up a world for these people where there is a lot of like going around.

Whether you realize it or not, the odds are very good that there are many areas of your life where you are coming from a position of lack. Your ability to release this lack and go forward with your life on more even ground can create a tremendous sense of peace and more natural accomplishments in your world.

I am an attorney by training; and attorneys, as a general rule, seem to be very concerned about getting approval from others. Most attorneys were good students and thrived on getting good grades and acknowledgment from teachers and professors. Similarly, attorneys want their clients to approve of them. Attorneys need judges to approve of them, and attorneys need their bosses to approve of them. The entire legal culture is based on getting approval from others.

This innate need that attorneys have for approval, I believe, is one reason that many attorneys are so unhappy being attorneys. They are constantly seeking approval and there is never enough to go around.

We all seek approval to a large extent, whether we are children, elderly, or somewhere in between. Our need for approval influences the way we talk, the clothes we wear, where we live, the sort of car we drive, the people we associate with, the clubs we belong to, where we go on vacation, and more.

Can you see how destructive this need for approval can be? The problem is that you never feel satisfied with anything in your life. You are always craving something other than where you are. You are never at peace, and consequently, this leads to stress, and you become unhappy.

The problem with seeking approval is that when you are seeking approval, you are coming from a place of lack. You feel that you do not have something and therefore are seeking it. Your need and desire for approval may actually prevent you from getting what you are seeking. Because you are constantly coming from a sense of lack, you are also depriving yourself of the capacity to give.

Many people have a tremendous need to be unique and different from others. They want to feel special and significant. This too is something that comes from a sense of lack. Here, the need to be significant is similar to the need for approval. We may want to drive the most expensive car, get the most awards, have the fanciest degrees, and so forth. We want others to see us as better than the rest.

If you are okay with the world and yourself, you never have the need to be significant and are okay just being yourself. The problem with the need to feel significant is that you are going to be constantly in competition with the world. If a new and better version of your car comes out, you are always going to want it. If everyone is getting a new sort of purse that costs \$5,000, you may want that. You may seek titles, awards, money, and many other things in order to feel as significant as possible.

Many people are seeking security. The man I told you about who stayed in the \$200-a-month apartment was certainly seeking security. However, he was fighting for security instead of being part of the natural path of abundance that is available to us all. Instead of seeing opportunity in the world, he was seeing lack. Wanting security means that you feel insecure. Going into life and the world around you with a feeling of insecurity provides the exact opposite result than seeing a sense of abundance.

Similarly, many people are desperately seeking to belong to groups or to connect with certain people. Their happiness is dependent on their ability to constantly feel a connection with people and to feel included. The problem with this line of thinking is that this also comes from a sense of lack. If you are constantly feeling disconnected, desiring to be part of groups you are not part of, and more—you are likely to constantly feel a sense of lack. This lack will create even more lack. Paradoxically, many of the greatest loners in the world are the people who most desire connection with others.

It is important to understand that in order to reach your full potential in your life and career, you must release the lack that you feel. In doing so, you will bring abundance to your life.

THE LESSON

Realize your inner sense of lack rather than letting it dominate your thinking and affect your interactions with the world. Envision the world as a place of opportunity rather than one of lack, and you discover a tremendous sense of peace and natural accomplishment in your world.

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