

The Solution to Problems Lies within Each Problem

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Our company owns a building where there is a furniture store downstairs. For several years, the furniture store and I have been in a battle of sorts. The furniture store continually leaves its front doors open so more customers off the street walk in. We don't like the doors open because it lets out the heat in the winter and the air conditioning in the summer. For the past several years, we have been exchanging insults, legal briefs and all sorts of nonsense due to the fact that I want the door closed--the furniture store continues to leave the doors open. Our building has an old air conditioning system and this air conditioning system ends up going out after a few weeks of the furniture store leaving its front door open in the summer. We continually need to fix the air conditioning system. Last year, we spent around \$40,000 fixing the air conditioning for the building and I'm sure a lot of this was due to the fact that the furniture store simply refuses to close its doors.

Around two years ago, I was driving by on a particularly hot Sunday afternoon with my baby daughter in a car seat in the back and noticed the door to the furniture store was open. I pulled over, took my daughter out of the car seat, walked into the furniture store, and politely (without raising my voice) asked them to close the door. The people inside the store (the owner, who I fight with, was off that day) were nice about it and agreed to do so. They also played with my daughter for a little while and told me how cute they thought she was.

On Monday afternoon, I was sitting in my office and a process server walked up to me and served me with a notice of a hearing on a temporary restraining order. A temporary restraining order is something you get against people when you are afraid for your life. They are very common among celebrities in Los Angeles, for example, who may be stalked by fans. They are something that people seek to keep away ex lovers who stalk them. They are typically not sought against landlords for asking someone politely to close the doors. In the motion for a temporary restraining order, the furniture store was claiming that my stop by on Sunday afternoon had scared the hell out of them and that they literally feared for their lives and didn't want me coming by the furniture store anymore. It was all a legal game; however, it ended up costing me \$3,000 in legal fees to get the suit dismissed.

For the next two years, we have continued to fight back and forth about this silly door being open. I can see when they leave their door open from my office and periodically throughout the day I look up and see their door open and then send someone over to ask them to close it. It has been a giant waste of time and has consumed a great deal of energy. In fact, I would estimate I've consumed around 100+ hours of my time worrying about the silly inanimate door downstairs. I've spoken with lawyers. I've had meetings about the problem. I've spoken with companies about installing cameras to catch them when they leave their doors open when I'm not around. I have complained to numerous, numerous people about the issue. I cannot even quantify (or imagine) how much energy of mine it has consumed. This figure, I'm sure is way more than 100+ hours. It probably could be quantified into weeks.

We all create problems in our lives about something. In fact, there is a need in most of us to create problems often if none exist. How we respond to the problems we face in our lives is something that creates our destiny. We all respond differently to problems.

So many people around us are constantly consumed by problems and responding to them and worrying about them. When I was growing up, I remember that my mother would sit on the couch or at the kitchen table each evening smoking cigarettes and talking on the phone to her friends about various problems. She would also do the same thing all day each weekend. There was always some sort of problem to be worrying about and discussing on the phone. She would also invite friends over to discuss various problems. As I grew older, I saw others consumed by problems like this as well.

- I watched people I know bite their nails.
- I watched people in college go off to talk to psychotherapists two or more times per week.
- I watched guys in my fraternity consumed with problems smoke pot, do drugs, and drink themselves into oblivion several times a week while worrying.
- I watched my best friend in a law firm go to normal to zoned out on all sorts of prescription medication prescribed by a psychiatrist because she was worried about problems.
- My girlfriend's best friend in college put a bag over his head and committed suicide in the dorms because he was worried about problems.

I've seen so many people absolutely consumed by problems it's hard for me to quantify. The number of problems that are available in the world for us to worry about and feel threatened by is incredible. Many people out there manage to find these problems and always will. There's a lot for us to worry about out there. What are you worried about?

Our response to problems is often quite ego-centered in nature. Many of us get our worth out of problems and the idea of being right. The ego loves to be right and always wants to be right. If the ego is right about a problem, then it has a little more value than it had before. The more we are right, the more we strengthen our fragile egos. Our egos are constantly seeking to be right about this or that. We want to be right and have a strong need to be right. Without problems and being right about these problems, our egos often suffer.

As I write this, I can think of a massive number of things I should be worrying about.

- I worry about how various employees in our company are doing.
- I worry about the economy. I worry about pending business deals.
- I worry about the building with the door open. I worry about the air conditioning system for the building going down again.
- I worry about my daughter falling down the stairs.

- I worry about my dog getting older.
- I worry about all the work I need to do.
- I worry about what the future holds.

There are a ton of things I can worry about, and if I think harder, I'm sure there will be more. I'm no different than you. All of us have problems and things to worry about. It's not the problem so much that's the problem but our reaction to the problem: *It is our responses to the problems we face that end up creating our destiny.* Most of us are dealt similar hands by life at one point or another and it's how we respond to these hands that makes all of the difference. Everyone has had his or her problems from time to time. You're not all that special in this regard.

Imagine what you could have achieved in your life by now if you never worried about problems. Imagine what would have happened to you by now in your life if instead of worrying about problems you took all of that energy and did something positive. This energy that goes into worrying about various issues and fighting with others is consuming and takes a lot out of you. There's no reason for you to have to spend so much time worrying about problems and various issues like this when you could be putting that same energy into much more productive pursuits.

Most of the problems we have are based on assumptions about what various things mean. Oftentimes, the assumptions we have are simply not true. We assume a comment means someone doesn't like us. We assume that if we aren't doing something in particular right then we don't have value. We are constantly making various assumptions about problems and various events and these assumptions are things that create more problems than the problem itself. So a great deal of our problem lies in the assumptions we make about what things mean and not necessarily the event itself.

How do we reach assumptions? Most of us reach these assumptions from events in our past and things that have happened long ago. The past is constantly projecting itself on our present. When you're comfortable with your past, there's often no conflict. A large part of your life and how you see the world is being run by your past experiences. Something is overtaking you and controlling your present: The past. Your freedom will begin when you see what's controlling you from the past. As long as you're afraid of your past experiences, you will never be able to enjoy the present. We aren't afraid of other people or what is happening outside: We are afraid of our past. Your past is constantly projecting itself into the future. As long as you're afraid of your past experiences, you will not enjoy the present. When you're not afraid of the past, people don't disturb you. Your past experiences contain everything. When you come to terms with your past, you realize you have the freedom to live the life you want. The deeper you go into your past the more you will find there's no problem. You need to become comfortable with your past.

One of the most useful things you can do is just to allow yourself to experience the "charge" that you get when faced with a problem. We often react to problems from a fear in our past or something that bothered us long ago. This fear creates a charge within us, almost a "fight or flight" sort of reaction. When we allow ourselves to experience this charge and sit and think about it, we often will find that the charge goes away. Instead of reacting to the "charge"--which is a message from our past--we are far better off reacting from a position of no charge and experiencing events and what happens to us in the here and now.

Life sends us challenges and messages in the form of problems. These problems are something we can either make work for us or against us. Our goal when faced with problems should be to have clarity about the true nature of whatever it is we're facing. Clarity removes conflicts, saves energy, and makes you efficient. Remove the charge from problems and react to them in the present and not the past.

Yesterday, I walked by the furniture store and noticed that the door was open yet again. I walked in and saw the owner. He looked stunned when he saw me walk in. He looked ready for a conflict and raised his voice and came over to me. I stood there and allowed him to vent about why he likes to leave his doors open and how he has every right to do so and so forth. He vented for several minutes and then I simply said to him: "If you want to leave your doors open that's fine. All I ask is that you pay me extra rent each month because it's wasting energy and very hard on the system and costs extra."

He agreed and a few minutes later we shook hands and I walked out of the store. No lawsuits and no worries and both sides are happy. The message of this to me is that in every problem, there is a solution. A solution is in every single problem we face and we can often be much happier and find ourselves "wasting far less energy" when we simply see the solution in each problem, deal with it, and move on.

THE LESSON

We all create problems about something in our lives, and respond to these problems differently. These problems are life's way of sending us messages and challenges. We can make these problems work either for us or against us. Develop a sense of clarity about the true nature of whatever problems you're facing. When you remove the charge from problems and view them in the present rather than the past, you will find that the solution lies within each problem and you save your time and energy in dealing with them.