

Happiness, Desire, and the Key to Life

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

One of the most fundamental things that define every human being is desire. We all desire something and we are all defined, for the most part, by that which we desire. In fact, our desires define us more than any other aspect of our lives. Our very days are filled with desires, starting with the sunrise:

- We desire a glass of water in the morning.
- We desire a shower.
- We desire food.
- We desire sex.

Everyone has certain desires that they work towards fulfilling each day. When you drive down the road and see people all going their own ways, they are all traveling to some destination due to some desire. It is the same thing with people dancing in a club. It is the same thing with people eating in a restaurant. It is the same thing with people in the office at work. It is all controlled by desire. We all desire something--something that we hope to achieve or obtain.

A disturbing movie, but one with an excellent script and cast, is the original *Silence of the Lambs*. In the movie, the following dialogue occurs between the two protagonists in the film:

Hannibal Lecter: First principles, Clarice. Simplicity. Read Marcus Aurelius. Of each particular thing ask: what is it in itself? What is its nature? What does he do, this man you seek?

Clarice Starling: He kills women...

Hannibal Lecter: No. That is incidental. What is the first and principal thing he does? What needs does he serve by killing?

Clarice Starling: Anger, um, social acceptance, and, huh, sexual frustrations, sir...

Hannibal Lecter: No! He covets. That is his nature. And how do we begin to covet, Clarice? Do we seek out things to covet? Make an effort to answer now.

Clarice Starling: No. We just...

Hannibal Lecter: No. We begin by coveting what we see every day. Don't you feel eyes moving over your body, Clarice? And don't your eyes seek out the things you want?

The nature of man is to covet, to need, and to desire. Desires can present themselves in many forms. There are basic animalistic desires, and then there are more complex desires that are more spiritual in nature. For example, we all desire food and shelter, which is a more intrinsic, animalistic desire. However, once we move beyond such basic desires we find in ourselves a desire for things like knowledge, power, fame, wealth, and so forth.

A simple man may just desire food and a roof over his head. A more complex man may desire wealth and power. A still more complex man may desire answers about the universe and life itself, or intellectual fulfillment. Every activity we pursue in this world is driven by some urge or desire. There are driving motivations that come from our bodies, and there are driving motivations that come from our souls. We are constantly seeking to fulfill both drives simultaneously, and we are constantly in motion. Here are some examples of various desires that various people have:

- A professor may desire to discover a new theory, or to get the praise of his colleagues.
- An athlete may desire to win a championship.
- A mother may desire to see her children happy.
- The businessman may desire wealth.
- The politician may desire to get elected to a high office.

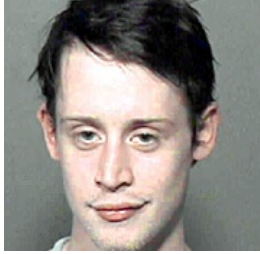
Inside each of us there is actually a yearning that is much deeper and more fundamental to our being than the individual desires that we are seeking; however, we all use our desires as a method to take us there.

The things that we desire are usually transient in nature. We may obtain the object of our desire, but eventually that which we have long desired cannot stay with us forever. And thus, just as the person who yearns for food will always eventually be hungry again, we are so left in a state of desire and yearning:

- The professor who desires and obtains the praise of his colleagues finds that this praise is short lived.
- The athlete does not win every competition. As he becomes older he can no longer compete, and is forced to seek out other forms of happiness.
- The mother who desires her children to be happy may find that one of her children becomes extremely unhappy, and she cannot change it.
- The businessman is always in search of making the next big deal, never staying content with his current accomplishments.
- The politician may feel his position has become stagnant, and he then desires to get elected to a higher office.

I am always amazed when child stars who became successful at a young age fail to continue their success into adulthood. They continue to desire fame and fortune but it alludes them, and when they are no longer in the limelight, these people often lead very difficult lives, which are defined by chasing happiness through drug binges, and other outlandish behaviors. Consider the case of Macaulay Culkin:

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Former child star Macaulay Culkin was arrested on drug charges Friday during a traffic stop,



authorities said. The 24-year-old actor, best known for his role in the *Home Alone* movies, was taken into custody on complaints of possession of a controlled dangerous substance without a valid prescription and possession of marijuana, according to the Oklahoma County Sheriff's office.

Culkin, who lives in New York City, was booked into the Oklahoma County Jail and released after posting a \$4,000 bond, a jailer said.

Authorities confiscated about 17 grams of marijuana from a vehicle in which Culkin was a passenger. Officers also found 16 milligrams of prescription medications used to control anxiety and seizures, according to a police report.

Culkin was in a vehicle driven by a 22-year-old New York City man who was stopped for driving 70 mph in a 60 mph speed zone and for making an improper lane change. After receiving a verbal warning, the driver allowed the police to search the vehicle.

Culkin told an officer there was \$3,000 in a bag on the floor of the car. The officer opened it and found a clear baggie of what appeared to be marijuana, the report said.

A short time later, Culkin allegedly pulled another baggie out of his pocket that contained white pills and other medication. Additional marijuana was found rolled in a metal cigarette box, according to the report.

It was not clear whether Culkin had a lawyer. It also was not clear why Culkin was in Oklahoma City.

In Los Angeles, Culkin's publicist, Michelle Bega, declined to comment.

What is a guy like Macaulay doing? He is chasing happiness through the only way he knows at a particular point in time. Perhaps he can no longer obtain happiness through his acting, so he chases it through other means; he is simply using short term methods to try and find long term fulfillment. This is a common story that we all have heard numerous times. Everyone is wired to try to find happiness and fulfillment; it is a major part of human nature.

The problem is that most of us never find ourselves in a true state of contentment. We are always seeking something and consequently we never allow ourselves to feel fulfilled. The happiness we seek is ever present and ever elusive. It is fleeting, at best. We spend most of our time searching for this happiness and not enjoying actual happiness as we find it. So, the majority of our desires remain unfulfilled.

What are you seeking in your life?

When most of us seriously consider all the things we want *out of and from our lives*, most of the desires we typically discover are spiritual in nature. Deep down we do not really care so much about driving the fancy car, marrying the rich husband, having the status, the income. What we really want is something more spiritual, much deeper, which is generally related to genuine happiness. We may say that we desire:

- Family.
- Happiness.
- Wisdom.
- Freedom from anxiety.
- To make a contribution.
- Freedom.
- Health.
- Love.

Most of these things that we desire in life cannot be measured specifically. You also cannot hold any of these things in your hand, or possess them like you would a car, or a house.

We can measure winning a big race if we are an athlete who runs races. We can measure winning the office if we are a politician. We can measure material wealth if we are a businessman. However, when it comes to what we want out of life itself, most of what we desire from life can never be measured and it is much deeper.

One of the most fascinating character types I see in film and TV is the addict, who is always seeking the next score. What is so fascinating is that the drug addicts will inevitably go to whatever length necessary to get what they are seeking. They will sell their body, steal, manipulate others, and more. What they are seeking is a form of "happiness" or satiation, just as we too are all seeking happiness and satiation through all of our desires. The drug addict is continually doing everything within his power to move towards a form of happiness that comes and goes. This aspect of the drug addict fascinates me because what he is doing is really no different from what all of us are doing. We relentlessly seek happiness in our lives through wealth, achievement, and so forth: The heroin addict is simply an extreme example of what we are all doing in our lives as well as in our search for fleeting happiness.

People have always been in search of happiness. No matter what happens to us, we continue on this search. We want to feel contented emotionally, we want fulfilling careers, we want to have good family lives, we want security, and an ultimate feeling of sustained happiness. The majority of our desires remain unfulfilled since, even when we do obtain them, they are fleeting.

What does this mean to your [job search](#), career, and life? It means everything, and if you understand the significance of searching and desire, you can find happiness in your career. Every single one of us has something that we love and enjoy. When we find this work, time stands still and we enter into another dimension of sorts--and this is the dimension of sustained happiness that I am speaking about. What we love could be teaching, it could be trading on eBay, it could be working on cars, it could be counseling people--there is something that can bring each person extreme happiness. You need to find this thing and keep doing it. When you do not love what you are doing, life is different. It is more difficult and unenjoyable. The pain that we experience in our lives and careers happens when we are disconnected from that which brings us true joy. There is nothing more important than finding and maintaining this connection.

When you find something you love, engaging in it continually makes you happy and allows you to improve at all times. This allows you to experience a happiness that halts the *seeking behavior* and mentality, and allows you to settle down and enjoy your time on earth. You want to enjoy your time on earth and you will find this when you are doing what you love.

The key to finding happiness in our lives lies in loving what we do.

THE LESSON

While everyone's respective wishes motivate them, their fulfillment seldom brings anyone happiness. Don't perpetually chase after the next goal, but instead learn to love what you do; when you reach this state you will have chosen to be happy, you will improve yourself, and you will eventually become a happier and more accomplished person.

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