

## Your Ability to Be Free Will Determine Your Success

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

A crucial part of your future success and happiness is having the ability to *be free*. The concept of freedom is difficult for most people to truly understand because hardly anyone is *really* free, in the deepest sense of the word. Most people are trapped by their own mental barriers, by obligations to others, by financial constraints, by habits, and in many cases by actual physical barriers. Moving toward true freedom is something that will forever change your life and career and will help you reach your full potential.

The founding principles of the United States were largely based on the idea of freedom for all citizens, as exemplified by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Also, the United States generally speaks out aggressively against countries that limit freedom of speech and religion. Entire wars have been built around the concept of providing freedom to various people. Perhaps the biggest shame in our history revolves around an age when slavery, a willful limiting of freedom, was pervasive in our society.

The entire fabric of our nation is built on freedom and as a country we are always pushing toward equality for all people. For example, there have been a lot of recent debates about giving gay people the freedom to marry. Before that there was much debate about gays in the military. And a few decades ago equal rights for women and people of all races were major social issues.

Because society overall values the idea of freedom as an inherent human right, if someone commits a crime, society will generally limit the person's freedom in some way, as punishment. Society will place the person in prison, in home detention, or on probation. The least desirable people end up in prison and experience the ultimate limiting of their freedom.

At the same time, making money is also highly valued by many societies. What does making money represent other than having more freedom to purchase things, to go wherever we want, or to not have to work? Money represents freedom for many working people.

Yesterday in the *New York Times* there was an article about people who have lost their jobs and are hiking around the United States. The people have beards, live off of handouts, and for the most part, have no responsibilities other than to make sure they eat and survive. Apparently, this hiking around has become quite popular, as more and more people have lost their jobs over the past few years. The article painted a picture of the people who were hiking as people who were living a life that was neither honorable nor fun. They were portrayed sort of like beggars and societal throwaways.

I have never respected this way of life. I think this is because it has always been drilled into me that it is important to have duties and to do things a certain way. I have a job, car payments, a mortgage, a wife, two daughters, and lots of other responsibilities. In fact, from the moment I get up each day to the time I go to bed I am involved in one responsibility after another. Even my weekends are filled by various responsibilities. I probably could not go on a two-week hike through the wilderness, even if I wanted to.

For some reason, I have been seeing a lot of documentaries lately about children who are reunited with their mothers after being put up for adoption when they were younger. In most of these shows the mother who gave up her child for adoption is interviewed and says something like "I was not ready for the responsibility," or "I wanted freedom and I was young." The mother is always portrayed as someone who is in the wrong for her decision, and she is often not respected for her actions. Society typically assumes that the person should bear the responsibility of raising his or her own child.

Raising a child, working in a job, supporting a family, and so forth are all "barriers" and things that limit our personal freedoms. The message that society sends to us from a young age is that the limiting of these freedoms is the expected course of our life in becoming an adult, and that being a productive member of society involves accepting these barriers and an inherent lack of certain freedoms that comes along with them. Going to school creates a lack of freedom because during school we cannot work or do other things. Children who do not go to school are considered vagrants and are deemed *bad*. Getting married creates a lack of freedom. Most religions have certain rules that go along with them that limit what people can eat, or drink, or wear. In order to adapt and to be a part of society, most of us subject ourselves to various limits on our freedom.

I myself am *trapped* by the idea that I need to work, that I need to be a responsible husband and father, and that I need to be a certain person. In short, I have lots of rules for how I believe I should be acting and what I should be doing with my time. I do not look at any of this in a negative sort of way, it just is. Most people have to be at work each day. They have various things they need to be doing and places they are supposed to be at appointed times. They have banks and others they need to give their money to. They have children they need to support. They have duties they need to fulfill to organizations. Most of our lives are taken up doing one thing after another, and eventually we feel trapped.

The more trapped people are, the less free they are. In order to make the most of your life and career you need to understand the limits that may infringe on your freedoms--and then decide which ones you can do without.

Most people are trapped simply by their thinking, and therefore they struggle to enjoy life. Our thinking is the greatest limit we impose on any of our freedoms. Believing you need to be a certain sort of person, that you need to behave a certain way, that you need to be doing a certain type of job, that you need to only associate with certain types of people, and more--all limit our sense of freedom.

I used to be an attorney and I did not enjoy it at all. I realized I was in a "respectable" profession, however, after a while I began to feel imprisoned by my job for the following reasons:

- I had to be in the office all the time
- I could not take vacations without having to worry about deadlines

- I was always supervised and at the mercy of clients, courts, and higher up attorneys

This is the way of life for most attorneys in large [law firms](#). They may make good livings, but it is very difficult for them to enjoy their lives and careers--or the fruits of their labor. Moreover, because they do not have other skills, they cannot seek other employment, and they go through life exceedingly unhappy. There are exceptions, of course, but many attorneys live like this. The thought that they *need to be* attorneys is what imprisons these people. If they thought differently, their lives would become different and they might be happier. Most people never abandon this thought process, however. They remained imprisoned, out of a fear of what might happen, should they deviate from the prescribed path.

Our presumptions of what we *should* be doing imprison us; however, our presumptions of what we *should not* be doing also imprison us. Many people do not do the sorts of jobs they are good at and would like to do because they do not believe these jobs are respectable. Many people do not marry the sorts of people they would like to because of differences in social class or religion. Many people never come *out of the closet*, because they do not believe being gay is respectable.

I cannot believe how much I enjoy my life and how different my life has become since I learned to think differently. For as long as I can remember I have done self-hypnosis to "charge up" my mind and convince myself on a subconscious level that I can do all sorts of incredible things and follow my dreams. I have programmed my mind to change my thinking for the better. This has made a huge difference in my life in all respects. Self-hypnosis has enabled me to go beyond the limits my mind has set for me and attain freedom.

When you see the most successful people in any profession, you will generally find people who have dismissed the limits on what is possible for them, who worked on their minds to limit, or eliminate various mental barriers they once had. The fewer barriers we see, the more we can achieve. The more freedom we believe we have, and the more we believe we can do, the more we will achieve.

Obligations to others is also something that often limits our freedom. These obligations could be to members of our religious group, our employer, our children, our spouse, or otherwise. Obligations to others are a necessary part of being a responsible adult; however, many people allow these obligations and commitments to control their lives altogether. They are trapped in these relationships. I once knew of a man whose wife would never let him leave home, except to go to work. When he would leave for reasons other than work she would feign some sort of sickness, or crisis, to keep him at home. The man scarcely was able to leave the confines of his house except with his wife, or from 9 to 5 when he was at his job. This is more common than you might think. A great many people find their freedoms limited by others.

Financial obligations can also limit our freedom. Financial obligations may make it virtually impossible for some people to ever stop working--or take a simple break now and then. These people may take on giant mortgages, car payments, loans, and so forth, which limit their freedom. These obligations make it difficult for these people to do anything but their jobs, even if they would like to do something else.

At the same time, a lack of money also limits our freedom. The more money people have to spend, the more they can do. If you have enough money you can retire from your job. You can start a business, or take a vacation. Lack of money for many people is a continual reminder that they lack freedom. Money buys freedom to some extent.

Habits limit our freedom. Many people engage in substance abuse and have other problems that limit their ability to travel and do many things. Several years ago I wanted a friend of mine, with whom I had grown up, to come visit me from another state. He told me he wanted to come visit me but he confided in me before he took the trip:

"Listen, can you get any pot? I smoke it every day and I do not want to travel with it on a plane because I might get busted."

When I told him I did not know where someone could buy this, he told me he could not visit. A few weeks later he called and said he found someone in Los Angeles who would meet him at the airport with some pot so he could come to visit. The reason this was so fascinating for me to hear was that he was literally grounded in a city--all due to his drug habit. I have known people who were alcoholics who refused to have dinner in restaurants that did not serve hard liquor. Imagine not having the freedom to eat at certain restaurants because of a habit that severely limits your freedom.

Finally, many people are limited by geographic or physical constraints. If you lived in North Korea, this would be a geographic constraint that limited your ability to be successful. Similarly, if you are living in a small town in the middle of nowhere, and have incredible talent as an actor, music conductor, or otherwise, you are limited, and would have greater opportunity in a larger city. If you get sent to prison, you are of course, limited physically as well.

Attaining psychological and financial stability and success in your career and life typically go along with having more freedom. Most people do not perceive they are free, and they constantly create barriers to their freedom, which limits them in everything that they do. Your ability to create a world around you that supports and does not limit your freedom will determine your ultimate level of success.