

I want what you have!

"Our envy of others devours us most of all." - Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines envy as "painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage."

With the economy in turmoil, with folks losing their jobs or full-time status, with bankruptcies and foreclosures on the increase, with having to do more with less, with relationships seeming to disintegrate more rapidly, with so many struggling to "be somebody", it's no surprise that a fair amount of folks are caught up in a spell of envy.

"A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." - Proverbs. 14:30,

While some experts believe envy is a positive motivator (and it can be in some cases), mental health statistics and reports seem to point in a different direction – that envy is the catalyst that leads to depression, anger, resentment, malice, greed, violence, abuse, incivility and deep-seated negativity. When our "bones rot" they don't rot alone. Our mind, our heart and our body follow.

You're experiencing abject fear about losing your job and one colleague lands a plum position in a new company while another receives a promotion. You're a sole proprietor whose client base is drying up and your competitor seems to have clients beating her door down. You have trouble making your mortgage payments and your closest friend has just purchased a new home. You've just taken your car in for repairs and your neighbor drives up in a new expensive sports car. You're experiencing conflict in your relationship and the fellow next door, newly divorced, brings home a new "trophy wife." You're putting on weight while your partner has just shed 40 pounds. Your child is struggling academically and your brother's son has just made the honor roll. Envy.

"Envy is the ulcer of the soul." – Socrates

In the throes of envy, we become mired in a sense of lack and deficiency. And, like an ulcer, envy eats away at you, consciously and subconsciously. It seems to be the energy that is running your life - a life of frustration - feeling like you're being decimated from the inside out.

"Envy is like a fly that passes all the body's sounder parts, and dwells upon the sores". - Arthur Chapman

Envy drives our perspective, and not in a positive way. Envy make us want to "get even" and in the process of getting even we usually end up doing, speaking or thinking in a way that most often is self-destructive. We either obsess about inflating our egos or denigrating others for what they have or who they are. Either way, it's a lose-lose proposition.

The honest reality with envy is that it's never - repeat never - about the other person. Envy can be a blind spot. As Pogo said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Few folks realize they are their own worst enemy when it comes to envy.

"There are many roads to hate, but envy is the shortest of them all." – Anonymous

The road to hate at work, at home, at play and in relationship can be quite overt or very subtle. We find ourselves overtly attacking others, gossiping, bullying, slandering or libeling, being abusive or spiteful, or quietly reveling in others' mistakes or secretly wanting others to fail while we seethe inside. Envy is the cause of eroding relationships, camaraderie and collegiality. Envy eats away at intimacy, openness and connection.

"It is in the character of very few men to honor without envy a friend who has prospered." - Aeschylus

The underlying energy around envy is wanting what others have. While focusing outward on what others have, the envious one is also dwelling on "what's wrong with me." In this place of self-loathing and self-pity, when we feel "less than", we tend to focus on what we don't have. And we know the Law of Attraction says that we attract to ourselves that which we dwell on. Lack attracts lack. And caught up in a downward spiral of envy, you're moving backwards, sowing seeds of doubt and limiting your potential.

The antidote to envy

The way out of envy is first to admit your envy. See it for what it is without judging yourself for your envy. The next step is to choose to eliminate or reduce your distraction with what others have. That's a choice. When we fill our mind with thoughts of lack, there's no room to focus on a "way out" - no way to put your energy on your feelings of self-worth and self-value (they're there - just covered over and veiled). Rather than being caught up in feelings of depression, hopelessness and worthlessness that accompany envy, the choice is to move towards letting go of the doubt, the envy, and self-criticism.

The antidote to envy is to make an honest, sincere, steadfast, and conscious effort to explore your intrinsic self-worth and potential. When you let go of beating yourself up, and take time consistently to relax, breathe, go inside and self-reflect, you can often access your sense of inner self-worth and esteem - an inner sense of worth and esteem that is not connected to anything or anyone "external." An inner sense of worth and value that can promote energies of positivity, strength, courage, self-discipline and compassion for one's self.

You can decide to not be envious or jealous. It *is* a choice. The choice to be free of envy also allows an opening to possibility, to potential. Why? Because the control that your negative feelings had on you is released.

As you consciously choose to let go of the feelings of envy, breathe deeply and sense deep down into your heart center, in the middle of your chest, and with a sense of adventure and curiosity, begin to explore your potential, possibility and opportunity. When your mind comes in with judgments and criticisms, recognize them and allow them to float by like the clouds in the sky on a windy day.

Return to your choice to explore your potential and possibility and see what arises. Relax, breathe deeply and allow your heart and your body (not your "logical" mind) to inform your reflection. Focus on your self and be curious about what arises. Don't judge or rule anything out.

When a nugget of information that seems important arises, write it down and return to your deep reflection. When you feel complete with this session, explore what you saw, what you discovered and, objectively, look at the potential inside of what arose. Then, make a list of "baby steps", small discrete tasks you can undertake to make the potential reality. What might you need to do next? Who might you need to talk with? What skill might you need to develop? What knowledge or information might you need to gather? Then, organize the small action steps, prioritize them, schedule them and execute them. And begin your journey.

As you spend time creating or re-creating your self, your feelings of envy will begin to dissipate, replaced with feelings of possibility, hope, optimism and self-worth. From this place of well being and positive esteem, you can begin to move your life forward with a sense of power, control and freedom, unencumbered by the weight of envy.

So, our \$10 food for thought questions are:

- Who are your friends and acquaintances that you envy? (hint: Think of people that you privately criticize, judge, make fun of, slander, resent, or are malicious or insecure towards.)
- Do you often find yourself throwing “pity parties” for yourself? Why?
- Do you find it hard to acknowledge, compliment or praise others? How does this make you feel?
- Do you constantly put yourself down? How does this make you feel?
- Do you feel folks are better than you? Why?
- Do you make up stories to justify your envy and your envious behavior?
- Did anyone ever tell you they were envious of you? How did that make you feel?
- Do you ever collude to support others’ envious feelings? Why?
- What was your experience around envy as you were growing up?
- Do you ever feel fake, that your life is a facade? Why?
- Do you have a strong need to be seen, appreciated and admired?
- Is it easy or challenging for you to empathize with others?
- Can you visualize a life without envy?

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