



The secret to abundance
lies in striking a balance
between *not enough*
and *way too much*

MORE THAN ENOUGH

We all strive for more. It's natural. But the secret to happiness is in finding a middle ground between having what you want and wanting what you already have. Here's how

LET'S BE HONEST. No matter what moral high road we try to take, when it comes down to it, enough is never really enough. If a new pair of jeans can restore your lagging spirits, then a whole new outfit would surely bring on sheer bliss. If you rent a cozy one-bedroom apartment, you yearn for that

2,200-square-foot house. Call it an upgrade, call it retail therapy—our desire to acquire can be all-consuming.

“If there were an Olympics of desiring, we’d all make the team,” says William B. Irvine, author of *On Desire: Why We Want What We Want*. The success of best-sellers like *The Secret* (a wealth-help hit with 3.75 million copies in print) is testament to just how overriding this urge is. But here’s the thing: We can’t help it. Scientists tell us that, to a certain degree, desire is hardwired. Seeking more is simply our blueprint for survival—not to mention part of what lends our lives a sense of satisfaction, pleasure, and surprise. “We’ve inherited this evolutionary programming,” Irvine explains. “Our ancestors who sought more were more likely to survive and reproduce than those who didn’t.”

Of course, as anyone who’s ever failed to find everlasting joy in a new pair of Pradas knows, this genetic propensity puts us in a bit of a bind. Want too much, and you risk being perpetually disappointed, and possibly broke. Worse, your purchases can leave you feeling empty—especially if you’re striving for things that won’t really make you happy. But the flip side (want nothing, ever) isn’t realistic, or even healthy.

So how do you achieve a better life without letting the quest consume you? How do you strive for more in a way that’s guided by genuine vision, not just what’s on sale? For answers, we turned to the foremost experts on self-transformation and wealth. The secret to abundance, they told us, lies in striking a balance between not enough and way too much—and getting what you want in life while cultivating contentment for what you already have. “True wealth is an inner state, not an outer one,” says Luanne Oakes, Ph.D., author of *Sound Health Sound Wealth*. “It’s knowing that all’s well, and that everything you want is on its way.”

BY TERRI TRESPICIO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CIG HARVEY

Focus on Now

Simply put, abundance is the “cup runneth over”—whether that means a house full of kids, a fat bank account, or a plethora of opportunities. We tend to think of it, however, as something that we get “after”—after we’ve worked, made millions, written a best-seller, raised the kids, retired. But as it turns out, we’ve got it backwards, says Irvine. Abundance doesn’t happen “when”; it happens *now*. Part of our ability to be satisfied, he explains, is to extract more pleasure from the things that are right in front of us.

“Those who have thought carefully about desire have concluded that the best way, perhaps the only way, to attain lasting contentment is not to change the world around us, but to change ourselves,” Irvine notes. If we can convince ourselves to want what we already have, we can dramatically enhance our happiness without any change in our circumstances.

So the first lesson in abundance is this: To experience it at all, you have to decide to feel it here and now. “As long as we keep waiting for circumstances to be right, that’s conditional happiness,” says Victoria Castle, author of *The Trance of Scarcity*. “And as a result, we give up living in the moment”—and thus our shot at ever feeling that the cup runneth over.

Make it happen Dwell on the good stuff

- + Create a regular habit of gratitude. Every morning, before your feet touch the floor, think of something you’re thankful for—big (your home) or small (your cat).
- + Rather than lie in bed at night criticizing yourself for what you did or didn’t do, review your accomplishments. Think about good things that happened, or the conversations that mattered. This gives you a sense of fullness before you go to sleep and adds to your sense of abundance when you wake up.
- + Rediscover the romance of a past acquisition. Consider one thing (a favorite perfume, a beloved sofa) that you spent a considerable amount of time looking for and took great pleasure in acquiring. Where did you find it? How often have you enjoyed using it, and do you still? Appreciate the thing itself more fully by reliving the satisfaction of wanting and getting it.

Take Action

No doubt you’ve heard a variety of New-Agey approaches to attracting more of what you desire, whether it’s hanging a mirror in your window, carrying a crystal in your pocket, or writing out your order to the universe (shipping is free!). While some practices can help hone your focus, they can also give the pursuit of abundance a mystique that it may not warrant.

The fact is, you don’t need any spells, voodoo, or magic wands. “We get hung up on the ‘mystical’ underpinnings of abundance,” says Victoria Moran, author of *Fat, Broke, and Lonely No More*. “While that’s a part of it, the kind of abundance most of us are looking to manifest is right here on earth.”


In the end, Moran says, focus and discipline will get you what you’re really after. For instance, you might have 10 things on your to-do list, but maybe only three will bring you more of what you want; the other seven do nothing but keep you busy. “Sometimes we’re not looking at the nuts and bolts of what we’re doing,” she adds. “You’ve got to focus to get things rolling.”

Make it happen Set abundance in motion

- + Make a list of things you have to do. Next, write down five things you really want to see take shape in the next month. Now compare the two lists. How do they match up? Are your to-do’s bringing you closer to the things you want, or are they just filling up your time?
- + Next, prioritize your long-term goals, whether this means drafting a plan to pay off credit card debt, turning your spare bedroom into a home office, or researching that book you’ve always wanted to write. Commit to putting these actions first on the list so they don’t get buried under the busywork.

Rediscover the romance of a past acquisition.



A woman is relaxing in a bathtub filled with white bubbles. She is lying back, her head resting on the edge of the tub, and her eyes are closed. Her right hand is resting on the edge of the tub. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Live lavishly:
Start thinking
and acting like an
abundant person.

Make Space

James Arthur Ray, self-made millionaire and author of the forthcoming *Harmonic Wealth: The Secret of Attracting the Life You Want* (due out in April), is no stranger to having a lot—and losing a lot. After the stock market crash of 2000, he was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and going through a breakup. “Up to that point, I had everything I could want—a million-dollar-plus home, a booming business, a new Porsche, a beautiful girlfriend. Now my net worth had just been cut in half, and I was worried about how I’d hold on to my things. Then it occurred to me: It’s just stuff.” He decided to sell his home, his artwork, and most of his furniture, and that action made all the difference. “That’s when I realized that being free and joyful was more important than the material things.” Worrying less about his possessions freed him up to focus on his business, and he was later able to more than make up for his losses.

You don’t need to go into debt to pare back. Get in touch now with the stuff you have, the stuff you love, and the stuff that just takes up space. After all, as any feng shui consultant worth her salt will tell you, to bring about more of what you want, you have to make room for it. This, in fact, is one piece of the theory behind the Asian art of placement. Lynne Twist, a global activist and author of *The Soul of Money*, strongly advocates clearing clutter as a way to allow abundance to flow into your life.

Make it happen Clean house

- + What do you have lying around that you haven’t touched in a year or more? What might be useful to someone else? Gather up what you no longer use and donate or sell it.
- + Start a one-in, one-out practice; only commit to buying something new when you can let something else go first, suggests Twist.
- + Before you make a purchase, ask yourself: “Would I buy this if there were no one around to appreciate (or be impressed by) it?” Irvine recommends using this test to find out who you’re buying it for.

Relax Your Grip

If there’s one thing standing between you and a life of abundance, it’s the belief that there’s not enough to go around. “We live in a consumer culture caught in the great lie of scarcity,” says Twist. “This siren song leads us to believe that there’s not enough of anything—money, jobs, market share, energy, love.” Fearful that we’ll be left out, we panic and grab for things that seem to bring us comfort and security (more “stuff”). But they might not be what we need (more time with friends and family—or time to ourselves).

Just as abundance isn’t about hoarding, it’s not about struggling, either, says Castle. “It’s about living in the world with ease.” Try shifting your perspective to see the world as one full of potential. Because old habits die hard, this takes discipline and practice. “It makes perfect sense that we would want to control situations where we feel at risk,” says Castle. “To move from control to trust, we have to see that we’re part of something bigger than ourselves.” Once you do that, she says, it’s much easier to let go.

Make it happen Say “enough”

- + Pay attention to where your survival instincts kick in, causing you to acquire more than you need. Whether it’s buying the 10-pack of tube socks at Costco or stocking your pantry with more food than you can eat, ask yourself what feelings inspire that decision. Do you find comfort in surplus? Are you genuinely fearful of not having enough? Why?
- + Practice walking away from “free.” “When you’re in your hotel room, stuffing your suitcase with the tiny soaps and mini bottles of shampoo and conditioner, you’re sending the message that you don’t have enough,” says Moran—and it feeds a deficit-driven view of the world. Before you avail yourself of a freebie, make sure it’s something you really need.
- + Think and act like an abundant (not a desperate) person, says Moran. When your inner critic begins her mournful chant (“I’ll never have money”), counter with thoughts that reinforce the notion that your life is a choice you make, not a fate to endure.

Give a Little

You might think it's easier to give when you have a lot of money, but donating can work wonders when things feel tight. That's because the expansive act of giving works to counter the clenching, narrowing sensation that fear of scarcity brings. "Giving frees up oceans of energy normally tied up in the chase for more, so that we can pay attention to and enjoy what we have," says Twist. When we hold onto things (money, possessions), we get stuck; when we practice letting go and sharing what we have, we strike a healthy balance—and invite even more abundance into our lives. "It doesn't matter where you give it, or how," says Edwene Gaines, self-described prosperity mentor and author of *The Four Spiritual Laws of Prosperity*. "By giving, you simply get yourself in the flow."

For Gaines and Moran, giving is a part of the budget. Both practice tithing, or donating 10 percent of their income to the people, causes, and organizations they care about. But they get more from this act than just a good feeling. Committed tithers swear that putting money back into the world brings them more in return. "I've never known anyone who practiced this sincerely and didn't get more of what they wanted as a result," says Moran. The message? When you let go, you let in more than you ever imagined.

Make it happen **Open the floodgates**

- + When you feel like things are tight, give. Take extra clothes to the Goodwill. Bake a cake for an elderly neighbor. Call a friend who needs to talk through a problem. Help an overwhelmed colleague. Leave change in the jar at the coffee shop. Don't worry about where the money is going; just give it. "It sounds counterintuitive, but this is where abundance lives: in the experience of the overflowing nature of the universe," says Twist.
- + Try tithing: In a lump sum or in smaller portions, give away 10 percent (or whatever amount you're comfortable with) of your earnings to the people and organizations that move you, whether it's a waitress who impressed you or a nonprofit working to bring art classes back into schools. You may be surprised at what comes flowing back.

Live Larger

If you want a life of plenty, act a little more lavish. "There's nothing wrong with wanting more for yourself," says Gaines. "It's not greedy when you know you can have all you want and so can everyone else." Of course, this doesn't mean spending irresponsibly. It means, says Castle, being open, loving, and generous with yourself, even if it's just indulging in small pleasures. "You don't have to spend a ton of money to be lavish," she says. "You can enjoy the breeze on your skin on a warm day, or take some extra time to read or sleep, rather than feeling that your entire life is a series of to-do lists." Gaines illuminates how simple this can be: Years ago she was flat broke but wanted to feel rich. So she bought a jar of olives stuffed with almonds—something she was sure only wealthy people ate. "The universe treats us how we treat ourselves," she says. "Are you giving yourself enough? Enough good food, rest, exercise?"

Make it happen **Play the part**

- + Find one thing (within your budget) that tastes, feels, and smells like abundance to you. Maybe it's as simple as a chocolate-covered cherry, a pair of fuzzy slippers, or a long nap. For Moran, it's eating fresh organic blueberries instead of the frozen ones that cost half the price. "If you want to be rich or richer," says Moran, "you need to start living like that now." What can you do today that makes you feel that you're living richly?

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and smells like
abundance to you.

