

## **What you want is not what you need, and what you need should be all you ever want.**

by Brian McAleer

Imagine this. You've been robbed of all your basic needs.

No food. No water. No shelter. No clothing.

No sight of any of these things anywhere around you.

No one comes to help you. Time stands still. An eternal nothingness, where you wait in hope that it might rain, that you'll find some food, that you'll find some kind of clothing to cover yourself, and that you'll find shelter to keep warm.

Aside from the physical needs we all must have to survive, but more often under appreciate, you are being robbed of your emotional and mental needs.

A sinister voice speaks to you, as if it's coming from all around. It says,

"No one loves you. You are not loved"

"You don't matter. You're not important"

"You will be stuck here forever"

"There's no guarantee that help will come; it may never rain, any shelter is unlikely, you will probably remain naked, and there might never be any food for you to eat"

"There's nothing you can do. You are helpless and hopeless. You have no control in this situation"

"And worst of all, this situation will never, ever change. It will remain this way, always. You are trapped here, forever"

A stark and harsh reality to consider, but do you realise that this is how many people are living their lives today. The example of the person naked and alone in a desert is an unlikely scenario, but it can feel this way for the millions if not billions of misfortunate people around the world.

These people wake up everyday without proper shelter, without enough food, no direct access to clean water, and only the clothes on their back, tattered and torn. And on top of that, it seems no one cares. Although they are surrounded by people, no one reaches out to them. Everyone else only seems to care about their own survival. The world they live in means they are either forced to subordinate to a higher power which wants to keep them this way, such as a corrupt dictator telling them how to live, a controlling military force using violence to keep them at bay, or push them out, or a ruthless terrorist group wanting to kill them simply for what they believe in.

Could you imagine yourself in this situation? What would be your main agenda? Survive! It's simple. When human beings have their basic physical and emotional needs taken away from them, they live in fear and despair. Only trying to exist moment to moment, unable to focus, concentrate, or have any kind of vision for the future. Worrying more about where they will sleep that night, where their next meal will come from, if they will have the water they need to drink, and often if they will even just live till tomorrow.

In today's world it might seem hard to believe that any individual could be void of all these things, but it's happening all around us. It's happening to the homeless people on the street, those affected by extreme weather conditions or natural disasters that take away their homes, those living in a country with corrupt governments and military forces that oppress their people and those who are being persecuted, tortured or killed for what they believe in by others who believe differently.

Now consider your situation. You might not have your dream house yet, but you've got a roof over your head. You might not have the ideal wardrobe to pull clothes out of, but you can dress yourself comfortably everyday. You might not get to eat at the fanciest, hippest restaurants in town, but you still have three meals a day. And you might think the drinking water in your city is average, but you can still turn the tap on and have instant access to an ever flowing source of water. These four things, are the basic physical needs we take for granted. When they are in place and working for us, we can then have our emotional needs met. So as you think of those who are living like the naked man in the desert, consider this.

You are **loved**. You have a family; parents, siblings, a wife or husband, boyfriend or girlfriend, your own children, friends and colleagues. They all love you on all the various levels of love that can be felt. This allows you to love back, feeling joy, happiness and fulfilment.

You have **certainty** in your life. You wake up each morning knowing there is breakfast in the cupboard. That your school or workplace will be there when you arrive. That you will be paid once a week or fortnight. That when you turn on the light switches, the heater, the TV and your computer, they will all work. That local supermarket will always stock everything you need. And that your car will start, or the train will arrive and take you where you need to go.

You also have the privilege of **surprise and spontaneity** in your life, meaning that you could meet that special someone today, that you could get a promotion at work, that you could win the lotto, and that you could have a total stranger buy you a coffee at the café, and that you can turn on the TV and watch a movie or TV show for free and be entertained for hours on end.

You also feel **important and special**, because you have family and friends, you have a job that needs you to show up and perform every day, that your own children rely on you and look up to you as their protector and hero, and that you have gifts, talents a voice and the opportunity to express them everyday.

You can also **experience new things** all the time, such as travelling, studying, starting a new job, buying a car, building a house, earning more money and becoming wealthy, and becoming more successful because there are places and people around you to help you become successful.

And you can **make a difference in the world**, through the work you do, your ability to say what you want anytime you want by getting on the internet and sharing your thoughts, to be instantly responded to by hundreds or even thousands of people.

All of this is available to you. We naturally move towards doing all of the above things in life, because they fall under our six emotional needs; love, certainty, uncertainty, significance, growth and contribution. But when our physical needs are not being met, we cannot have our emotional needs met. And that's the simple truth.

If you're reading this article, then you have the electricity to power your laptop or the mobile phone to read it, and you have access to the internet, which allows you to learn absolutely anything you want to. You can read, meaning you can learn, and be successful because you can apply what you learn. Often, we focus more on what we want, rather than what we need. We obsess over the newest clothes, the biggest houses, the flashiest cars, the coolest gadgets, the latest products, the perfect job and lots of money to keep on buying all

these things that make us “happy”. But when you simplify things, focusing mainly on your needs, and accepting how fucking lucky you are to have them all met on a daily basis, those *wants* in life don’t mean as much. You start to see your life as a gift, and appreciate it for the pure miracle of creation that it is.

So my message here? Don’t complain so much about your life situation and that you’re not getting all you *want* out of life.

When you stop and think about it, this world was made perfectly for us. When humans came into existence, they needed their four physical needs met. The earliest beings did this. They made clothes, lived in caves, hunted only to eat when they were hungry and treated water as a precious source that had to be respected at all costs. As humans evolved, becoming more aware and intelligent, we effectively met our physical and emotional needs, but that still wasn’t enough. We then shifted to focusing more on our wants. And in the Western World, if you were lucky enough to be born and raised there, you could have pretty much anything you wanted to. You took the basic needs for granted. Just expecting that they would always be there. That the supply would be unlimited. That you could flick on a switch, open a pantry, walk into a shop and arrive at your destination, and what you wanted would always be there. Endless and plentiful.

But as our population grew, these wants grew, and the resources couldn’t keep up with the demand. The Western World overshadowed the Third World, where the resources were scarce, and what was available was not of the best quality or even affordable. Did you know that the amount of food America wastes each year would be enough to feed a small village in the third world for fifty years? We’ve been told that there isn’t enough in the world to go around for everyone. No enough food, not enough water, not enough shelter and not enough money. That’s actually completely untrue. There is enough for everyone, but it’s just not distributed evenly. As we were placed on this planet, it was made to be an endless supply of resources. After we had exhausted the supply of one resource, we would discover another.

For example, the planet is addicted to oil. It won’t last forever, and when it runs out, we will replace that with another energy source, and this is already happening. When the water dries up in an area, it will rain somewhere else. When the food crops stop growing in one area, they will grow in another. The planet is constantly recycling itself, and creating its own equal balance naturally. However, mankind does not work in harmony with this balance, and expects the same resources will come in the same amounts from the same places forever. Well, as drought, poverty and famine have shown us, this just isn’t the case.

We are so fixated on our wants we don’t focus enough on our needs, instead only addressing them when the threat of our needs being taken away presents itself. Expecting to stay where we are and continue to do things the same way in the same place forever is the cause behind why so many people go through life without having their basic needs met. When instead, we need to accept that change is inevitable, and in order to have our needs met, we must change and move to where the needs can be met. This takes courage of course, because anything new, different and uncomfortable is avoided. That’s because we are addicted to our wants.

So here is my challenge for you. Try to focus only on addressing your needs for a while. Only eat enough food to satisfy your hunger. Only buy clothes to dress you comfortably and wear them for as long as they will last. Only drink water. And only live within your means,

meaning you fill your space with the basic things to support you in having your other needs met. And to add to this, find the people who are not having their needs met, and help them to do so. By doing this, you can still get what you want. Huh? How can that be you might be asking?

When we help others get what they need in life they can then get what they want, and this in turn meets our needs and allows us to have what we truly want.

It's true that the people who appear to have everything they want still aren't happy. They've got all the money in the world, the newest and best of everything, but they're miserable sons of bitches. That's because they are more fixated on their wants, which are externalised and focused on materialistic gain and instant gratification. They have neglected their emotional needs, which are internally driven, don't require materialist items and can last a lifetime, instead of just a short burst of enjoyment. Think about it.

If you do something that is driven by love, you will receive love in return. When you are clear about who you are and what you really want, it comes to you. When you are open to the unknown and let go of a need to control everything, you will experience wonderment and spontaneity. When you work on yourself, identifying where you need to grow in mind and spirit, you will advance through life and experience real success and fulfilment. And when you use your inherent abilities and gifts to make a difference in the world, you are seen as valuable and irreplaceable by those you help and you become a person who matters.

When someone focuses only on their wants, they act in the following way. They take action out of greed, to meet only their own desires and improve their situation alone – this makes them loathed, disrespected and condoned. When they have no vision for their life, going with the flow of what the outside world is telling them to do, they will never live out their truest potential. When they prefer to have total control, and manipulate people and situations to work in their favour, they will bring disappointment and catastrophe onto themselves sooner or later. When they are determined to stay where they are, never making an effort to change, learn something different, meet new people or let go and trust that things can be better, they force themselves into a corner and get stuck in their ways for good. And when they only help themselves, not going out into the world to serve and do good for others, they isolate themselves and never know the true meaning of reward and contribution.

Which approach would you prefer? Just existing or actually living?

Appreciate that you have all your needs met on a daily basis and let that be enough for you. Abandon your desire to want so much. Life doesn't give us what we want – it gives us what we deserve. And life only really gives to us when we give back. I'm not suggesting an altruistic life where you only give to others and completely neglect yourself. And I'm not suggesting only giving to yourself, as I have clearly laid out before. Find the balance. The Law of Reciprocity is a perfect balance of giving and taking. Meet your needs then go out there and use your position of power and privilege to help others meet their needs. When you do this, they start to believe they can have a life where all their needs are met.

And when our needs are met, we can dream. The purpose of life is to dream and go out there and achieve that dream. That is what we truly want, and all we'll ever need.



Brian McAleer is an Author and Life Coach, specialising in youth empowerment and goal-setting. He has published a book on goal-setting as well as several articles and e-Books on working with young people and various aspects of personal and professional development. Brian is also available as a workshop facilitator, keynote speaker and is a regular guest on community radio. You can learn more about Brian and his work by visiting his official blog – [brianmcaleer.blogspot.com.au](http://brianmcaleer.blogspot.com.au)