

Enough

*You can never be too rich or too thin.
Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor*

*We use to say, I don't care if we don't have any money,
As long as I got my sweet honey and a shack in the woodlands.*

*Now we say, I don't care if I don't have any money
but its not true*

We can't live without money, no, because we don't want to.

*We want one of those and two of those,
and oh that one looks neat, wrap it up.
Put it on my Master Card, put it on my Visa.*

Greg Brown

Something in the American mindset tells us that no matter how much we have or how much we get of something, we need more. There's never enough: not enough time, not enough energy, not enough sleep, not enough love, not enough money, not enough meaning to life, not enough fun, not enough rock the house sex. Being queer doesn't protect us from this very American obsession.

Test this for yourself. Take a couple of minutes and list 10 things *that you find desirable* that you have enough of. The phrase "that you find desirable" is key here, so things like "I have enough debt," "I have enough dandruff," "I have enough anxiety, thank you very much," don't count.

I'm not really a gambling person, but I bet that if you were totally honest, this wasn't an easy list to compile. I'm also willing to bet that you didn't put money on the list, at least not if you were thinking about the long term big picture.

Here in lies the rub. The yogis tell us that suffering happens when we let ourselves fall into the gap between what is (what we have) and what we want. They also tell us that while pain is inevitable, suffering is a choice. In other words, our obsession with getting more is making us miserable. At a fundamental level, we all already have enough. In this moment, we are breathing. We have access to food, shelter, and clothes. To quote Geneen Roth, "When you look through the eyes of lack, through shattered lenses, the world looks shattered, looks like there's not enough. If you take off the shattered lenses, the world is alright."

Try making the list again, but this time, put parameters on it. Try saying, "In this moment, I have all the _____ that I need." Again, focus on what is desirable. I'll help you get started. In this moment, I have all the air that I need. In this moment, I have all the love that I need. My refrigerator is jam packed and my pantry is well stocked. In this moment, I have all the food that I need. And even though my bank account has taken a major hit from the economic crisis that has impacted the nation for the last few years, in this moment, I have all the money that I need. And I have a circle of family and friends who have my back.

The point of this exercise is not to minimize your current situation. The economy sucks and many people are struggling financially. The national average credit card debt per households with credit card debt is \$15,799. This is nothing to sneeze at and lots of people owe much more than this, especially when car loans and student loans are added to the list. And life happens. Relationships fall apart. Friends, family and pets get sick and/or die. The thing is that if you just focus on how much money you owe or how rotten it is that your relationship fell apart, you're likely to spin into major anxiety and/or fall into a pit of despair and depression. What fun is that?

If you felt resistant to making this list or had a hard time coming up with things you have enough of, note that and be gentle with yourself. Try another experiment. Think about all the things in your life that bring you joy. You might consider things like pets, children, friends, supportive family, a loving partner, an engaging hobby, and/or good health. Go through your house and notice what you like, what you find comforting, and what you'd feel sad to lose or have taken from you. How do you feel when you focus your awareness on the positive things you have in your life rather than on what you don't have?

Ultimately, you have no control over the national economy, your employer's plans regarding downsizing, your partner's fidelity or your mother's health. What you do have control over is how you make sense of what is happening outside of you. You can lose yourself in misery about what you don't have or spin in fear about what you might not have enough of tomorrow or you can focus on gratitude and find peace through acknowledging what you do have. The way to do this is to keep yourself in the present moment. Meditation, yoga and centered breathing practices are helpful in this regard. It's also helpful to remind yourself that you have enough of what you need *in this moment*. Even in the worst case scenarios, there are places you can go and people you can reach out to get your basic needs met. To quote the Rolling Stones, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might find, you get what you need." Perhaps the queer community can lead the way of stopping the madness driven by the American obsession with more, more, more.

Originally appeared in *Outlook: Everything is Political*