

Chapter 8

Envy cripples you.

From the beginning of the time humans have inhabited this planet they have had to work hard to produce what they needed to live. In the earliest days, the first humans hunted and gathered and, later, learned to grow crops for their food. After they discovered they could create and control fire, they used it as a tool for warmth, cooking, and even hunting. As human history continued, men and women began to use tools with increasing flexibility and intelligence. Key tools like the wheel, the lever, blades of metal, and the pulley—all things we think have always existed and we take for granted, were major breakthroughs at their time. Even so, progress took centuries and it was not until the 16th – 20th centuries when humans began to create machines on a much larger scale that the world as we know it began to take shape.

As scientists and inventors created machines, they had to consider how to fuel them and how much work could be produced by the available energy. Of course, the energy that was available in the earliest days was that supplied by men and animals and later by steam, gravity, etc. Any form of energy has a source because energy (the power to effect change) doesn't just exist on its own without having been produced somehow. Something makes energy. If a machine requires a man or animal to do something to make it work, the energy supplied by the man/animal comes from food converted by the man/animal's body into chemical energy. The chemical energy is converted by the muscles of the man or animal into mechanical energy which, when applied to a machine, causes the machine to function. Riding a bicycle is a good example. You pedal using the muscles of your legs. The muscles, in turn, get their energy from stored chemical energy derived, ultimately, from the food you have eaten. Your pedaling causes the wheels to turn moving you forward. The potatoes you ate last night move you down the road! All of us are aware of these basic energy processes and could probably explain them if asked. We hardly ever think of them, though, do we?



Scientists in the 18th century were thinking about these same transfers of energy and, in trying to understand, discovered several principles or laws which they described as the Laws of Thermodynamics ("thermodynamics" just means "heat and energy"). We'll only discuss the 1st Law of Thermodynamics here which can, very basically, be summed up as "energy is neither lost nor gained, only converted". In the bicycle example, we can see that the chemical energy contained in the potato as carbohydrates was converted to other forms of chemical energy by your body. This stored energy in your body was converted to muscle work that was then converted by the pedals, gears, and wheels of the bicycle into forward motion and warm muscles (heat). We have all experienced this and, at some level, already knew about such energy transfers. We already knew that "energy is converted" even though we may not have been able to describe the Law of Thermodynamics that governs it.

By now, I'm sure you are wondering why we are talking about all this. How does this relate to the 8th law of life, "Envy cripples you"? It relates directly because emotional and psychological energy is also converted and is never lost. Like all other forms of physical energy, mental and emotional energy is conserved—neither lost nor gained—only converted from one form to another. This is so important an insight and so fundamental to your

psychological health that I felt I needed to spend some time in the previous paragraphs laying the foundation for it. Envy is energy and, as it is created and used, becomes converted into other forms of energy that also do things. What the envy energy is converted into becomes a very, very big problem for us as we shall see. First, though, let's discuss envy itself.

The word "envy" is a conflation of two Latin words "en" + "videre" = "on/at" + "to look". Envy arises as a feeling when we "look at" something someone else has and we would like to take it from them for ourselves or, at least, we would sort of like them to not have it if we can't. If we see another has the kind of relationship with someone we would like to have and wish we had and they didn't, that is "jealousy". Envy is primarily about things, attributes, and characteristics. Jealousy is primarily about people. Because everything that is true for envy is also true for jealousy, we can apply the law "envy cripples you" to jealousy as well and so can just keep our focus on envy here. They are both basically the same energy, however, and produce many of the same problems.

Envy arises as we *think* we somehow "lack" something and, looking around us, see others we *think* somehow "possess" what we *think* we need. Notice the emphasis on the word "think". This is because our perceptions of what we seem to need and others seem to have are usually distorted. You think you want or need a certain kind of car, house, body, appearance, age, talent, skill, educational level, wardrobe, achievement, etc. that you perceive (maybe incorrectly) someone you see has. You want it for yourself and feel a little malice toward this person for having what you want. That is envy. Envy is particularly prevalent in rich countries like America that seem to place a huge cultural value on having "more", winning over others, possessions, and external appearances of beauty, wealth, youth, etc. These are all *outer* things or attributes and the American culture is currently obsessed with the outer. We can also envy *inner* attributes in another like intelligence, kindness, generosity, and spirituality but we do this much, much less don't we? If we are busy envying it is usually something *outer*. All marketing on TV, radio, internet, newspapers, and magazines capitalizes on our tendency toward outer envy by presenting us image after image of all the things we could and should (in their view) have. Their hope is that the more we see what others have, the more we will want to have it too. It is really all about envy of outer things that, even if we do come to *own* wind up possessing us instead.

Envy, we said, is energy. It is the outer-focused energy of the screaming, petulant little unhealthy part of you called the "ego" that is never satisfied with what it thinks it has. You and I envy when we *think* we need something we *think* we don't already have. Again, our distorted *thinking* gets us into trouble. To begin to assess the degree of distortion in your thinking, ask yourself a very basic question: "what do I really need?" Think hard about this because all too often we allow our ego to confuse us about *need* and *want* and that sets the stage for envy to develop. What, then, do you really need? Try this as a test. As soon as you get to the period of this sentence, stop reading and take and hold your breath for as long as you can. Go! If you held your breath for as long as you could you probably began to experience, just before you exhaled and inhaled again, a deep appreciation and need for air. More than just *wanting* to breathe, you *needed* to breathe, hopefully, did, and are still doing so. You need air to live. You also need food and water. You need to excrete bodily wastes. You need some form of shelter from inhospitable climates in which you might also need clothes as a micro-shelter from the weather, to help you maintain your body's temperature, and as a protection from encountering things that could harm your body. If you put a person

on a desert island and gave them all the things listed here that are true needs, they will survive and may even thrive. They can do so because all their basic needs are met. While one can argue that needs for love, friendship, and belonging are also legitimate needs you can survive without these although life is certainly better with them. The point is that the list of your true *needs* is very, very short while the list of all the things you *think* you *want* (but may not actually *need*) is infinitely long.

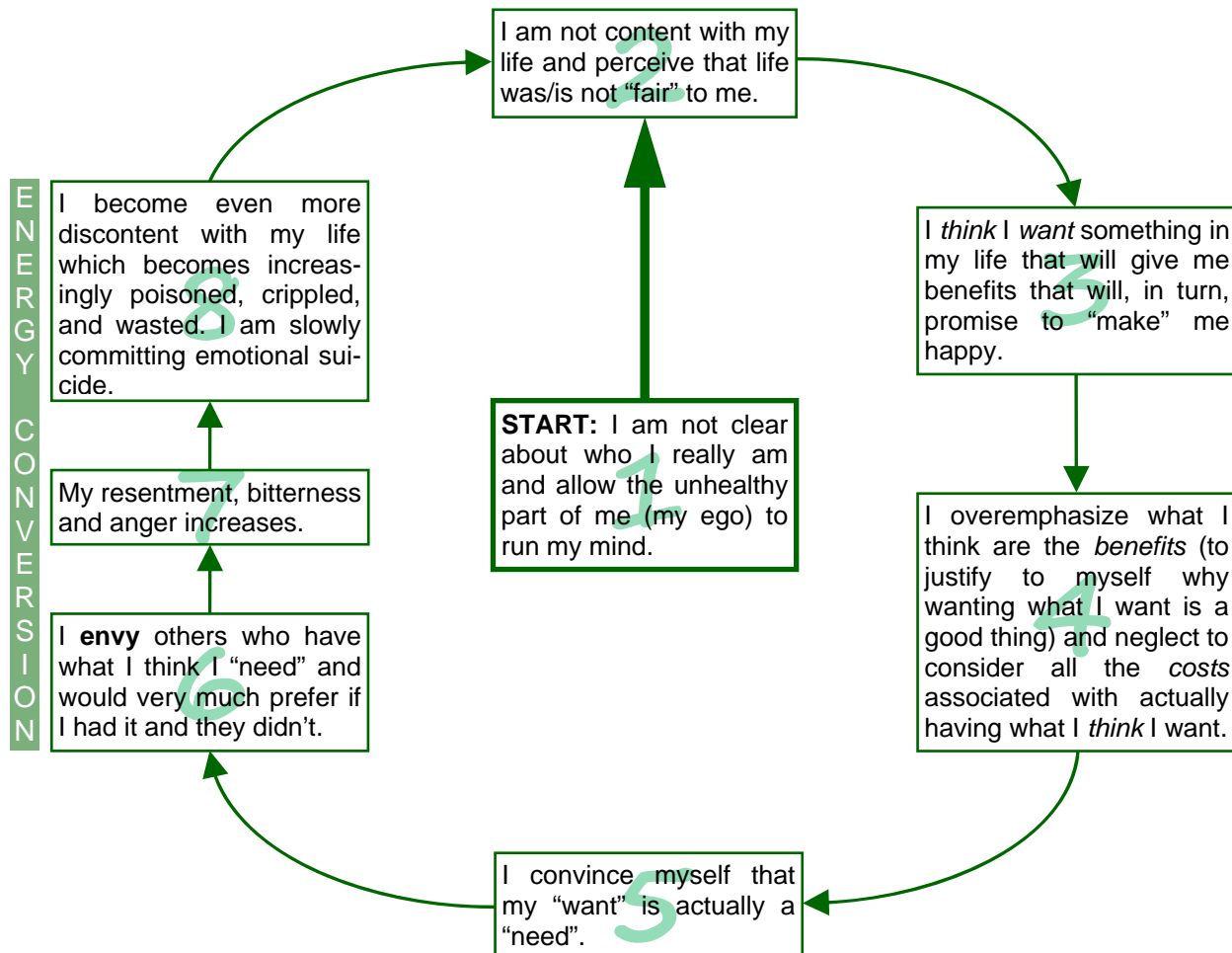
Since confusion about wants and needs is part of where the problem with envy starts, I'd suggest you spend some time discerning your specific wants and needs. Look at the table below. Take a pencil and write in as many things as you can think of that you currently want. If you have more than 10, continue on another sheet of paper. Once you have the **Wants** listed, think about each one and write at least one **Benefit** you think you would receive if you had the thing you want. Are there any **Costs** for having what you want? If so, write that in the next column. Is what you want a **True Need**? That is, do you really need this "want" so that you can continue living? If so, then write "yes" in the **True Need** column. If no, then write "no". Take some time to complete this table for at least five things you currently want. Don't skip this, though, because your work on this will pay off as you go on.

	Want	Benefit	Cost	True Need?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Most people know, very clearly, what they want. Yet they tend to delude themselves quite a bit about the *benefits* of what they want, usually don't adequately consider the *costs*, and have trouble distinguishing what they really *need* from what they merely *want*. Look at your list many times as we proceed. Let's start with **Benefits**. To what extent are the benefits you listed for each of your wants outer-focused, impermanent, and reflect what you *think* you *need* to be happy? If you are like most people, your benefits fit those descriptions pretty well. That is because most of us think that the benefits of having what we want will somehow "make" us happy or we will "find" happiness in the promises these benefits hold out to us. If you still think happiness comes from somewhere outside of you, I'd suggest you stop right now and re-read *Law # 5: Happiness is produced, not found*. If you don't get that law of life firmly in your consciousness and guiding you, you will continue to remain muddled about wants and needs and you will believe all the promises your "want" benefits tell you. The gains in happiness you *think* you will receive from having what you *think* you want are probably illusory. They are, at some level, promises that will not be fully kept. These benefits certainly will not "make" you happy or "give" you the happiness you desire. They just

can't. Nothing can. Only you can produce that happiness. If you stop and think about it long enough you will probably admit that it is your chasing after happiness that leads you to seek what you *think* are the benefits of what you *think* you want. Right? In other words, you want something not just for itself but much more for what you think it will give you (benefits) that, in turn, you think will leave you feeling more satisfied, more filled with delight, happier. It always comes down to happiness, doesn't it?

Look at your list again. Anything you wrote down that you want is on that list because you think having it is going to contribute something to your life that, ultimately, will create happiness for you. That, unfortunately, is mistake # 1. Mistake # 2 is neglecting to consider fully the *costs* associated with having what you think you want. Look at your **Costs** column. Is there anything there for each item? Are there any costs you are overlooking? I'll bet you needed more space for the **Benefits** column but didn't need much at all for the **Costs** column. Does that tell you anything about your misperceptions? Mistake # 3 is telling yourself that your **Want** is something you **Truly Need**. The last mistake in this train wreck is looking at all those around you who you think already have *what you think you need* (the huge benefits and teeny-tiny costs of which will bring you all that promised happiness) and wishing you had what they have—envy. To sum up, the nasty process goes like this:



The Crippling Cycle of Envy

The never-ending litany of things the ego *wants* and sees others have are all objects or attributes the ego desires, at some level, to *take* from another for itself. If you have ever seen ill-behaved 3 or 4 year olds taking toys from each other you've seen an excellent demonstration of the envious ego in action. The operation here is *taking*. Very little effort is involved in taking, either physically or just in our imagination, something someone else has. The envious ego is not interested in performing any real effort or personal work to get what it *thinks* it *needs*. The outer focused, ego-driven negative energy of envy is not used for such productive work. The unmanaged ego (Step 1 in the Envy Cycle, above) seeks, rather, to enhance itself and shore up its weak image of itself by simply taking from others even if only mentally through envying. It is deluded by the misperception that life was somehow “not fair” and “should” have been (Step 2), that it really needs what it thinks it wants (Steps 3 - 5), that others unfairly have what it thinks it needs (Step 6), and that envying is the way to balance the injustice. Although envy-energy produces no positive work or outcome, that energy, according to the 1st Thermodynamic Law, goes somewhere. It is not lost but is converted into feelings of resentment for having somehow been cheated by life (Step 7) and even more dissatisfaction with one's current experience (Step 8). The more dissatisfaction and discontent you feel, the more likely you are to repeat the cycle over and over further weakening any remaining healthy parts of yourself and leaving only a stronger and more resentful ego that repeats the cycle again.

In short, the energy of envy is converted into a sort of chemical that poisons your life and creates a noxious atmosphere around you from which all healthy people flee. Only others emanating a similar stench are attracted. Like seeks like such that you attract and secure for yourself others who are also committing slow emotional suicide. Reinforced by the same emotional contraction in others, you strengthen your outer focus, affirm your victimhood, and hand in hand with your dysfunctional pals head for the psychological cliff. A life wasted and destroyed. Yet it does not have to be this way. There is another path. There is a way out. The way out requires that you go backward before you can go forward.

Let's take a look at the path that lead us here and how to go back to where envy diverged in its path from a more healthy road. We have said that psychological suicide is the ultimate product of the energy of envy and all the nasty energies into which it is converted. We also said that the energy of envy, itself, is produced by the ego part of us that is entirely focused on outer things and thinks it should have them all. But there is also a healthy self, at least at some point in our lives, before the ego takes over. If we go back and get clear about that healthy self (Step 1), we can go back to the place where the paths diverged and take the healthier road instead. The healthy self is that part of you, no matter how small, that is aware and awakened:

- aware of your place in your world
- aware that you are not the center of the universe
- aware that you are a small but essential part of a total reality
- aware that your purpose is to awaken to who you really are and let go of who you think you are.

It may have been a long time since you last saw that part of yourself or, perhaps, you have never seen it at all before. It is there, though, and is the healthy “you” who doesn't need “outer” things to complete it, can learn to be comfortable with silence, does not need to be the center of attention or need to defend itself, and does not need to win to feel “OK” about itself. It is the “you” that is left when all the things and titles and position and money

and education and other achievements are stripped away. It is the “you” without all the “stuff”. None of those attributes or achievements or possessions are who you are. They are simply the things you may have thought you needed to be who you are or to be important because, maybe, you didn’t think, on your own, you mattered much. I am not saying those things are “bad” or that having them is “bad”. It is not about good or bad. I simply stress that they are not you. You are beneath these layers and you don’t actually *need* them to survive and maybe even thrive as you—the core, healthy you behind all these outer forms. That core you is the place to get back to and the person to focus on if you wish to take the healthier, non-envy pathway. Look at your list of **Wants** again. None of them describe this core you. In fact, the core you is the one doing the wanting and thinking that it is incomplete without these wants being fulfilled. That is, however, a lie. Look at the person you are. Who is s/he? What is s/he like? That person is you.

If you are able to become satisfied with the “you” you are and are perfectly OK with this you, the process of thinking you *need* while you merely *want*, all the destruction the envy cycle brings, and all those nasty conversion products dissipate. Knowing you already have the vast majority of what you might truly need, you release yourself from envying others you thought had the things you wanted and you thought you needed. Instead, you can do the opposite of envy. You can go back to Step 1, get clear on who you really are and take the other road: admiration.

Like the word “envy”, “admiration” is also a conflation of two Latin words: “ad” + “mirare” = “at” + “to wonder”. Envy is “to look at” and admiration is “to wonder at”. Look how similar the original meanings of these words are yet the processes that they each entail and the results they generate are worlds apart. When you envy, the unhealthy ego part of you “looks at” what it thinks it needs and wants to take it for itself. When you admire, the healthy, core part of you sees what others have, “wonders at” it, and is perfectly content with the other having it. Admiration involves no desire to take it for yourself, no wish the other person didn’t have it, no regret that you don’t, no malice, no resentment, and no nasty energy conversion products. Admiration means you see something in another you think is quite good, are genuinely thrilled they have it, celebrate that this wonderful thing is in the world and that you got a chance to enjoy seeing it, and mentally send this other person on their way with your good wishes for their happiness. You don’t feel poorer because they have something you admire, you feel richer for having seen and enjoyed it in their life. Like envy, admiration is also energy and it also follows the “energy is converted” law. What is a chief product of the energy of admiration? Gratitude.

In addition to being enriched by the things you admire in others and feeling grateful for them, you might also feel *inspired* to work hard in your own life to create this admirable thing as well. For example, if you see someone who is in great physical shape, is doing things you think are good, has certain virtues you admire, has relationships you think are healthy, has education or knows how to do something you feel is important, you can not only admire that in them but become inspired by their example to develop this in your own life. In this way you not only get the benefit of seeing something great in another and admiring it, but you also take away with you a desire and commitment to developing this in yourself and in your world. This inspiration, desire, and commitment are, in addition to gratitude, also conversion products of admiration. Although envy left you weaker, poorer, and more emotionally crippled, admiration leaves you stronger, richer, and more emotionally vibrant. The false promise that envy made to you that, by wishing another didn’t have what you convinced

yourself you needed and would somehow “get” if you envied, is fulfilled in admiration. Envy takes from you—admiration gives to you. Envy promises you will benefit but, instead brings only more costs. Admiration costs nothing but its benefits are lasting. You choose what you get out of energy conversion by choosing what you put in. Put in envy and you get weakness. Put in admiration and you get strength.

The positive energy you send out as you admire is also converted into attraction. It draws people to you who share that positive view. It also draws to you people who possess admirable qualities. The more positively focused and admirable people you have in your life, the more you are reinforced in your own positive focus according to *Law # 2: You get more of what you reward*. The more you focus on admirable things and how to develop some of these yourself, the more they grow in your life according to *Law # 4: What you focus on grows*. In addition, the more you do the work required to develop in yourself the admirable qualities that help you fulfill your sense of purpose or mission, the happier you are in accordance with *Law # 5: Happiness is produced, not found*. Admiration simply changes the entire atmosphere around you, discourages envious people from hanging around you, and refreshes your emotional life. All that envy promises admiration actually delivers.

How do you start moving from crippling envy to empowering admiration? Look at the Envy Cycle again. Where does it all start? Go back to the place where these two very different paths, envy and admiration, diverged and start over. Go back, then, to how you see yourself. Get the ego out of the driver’s seat for a bit and let the healthy part of you take the wheel. Take out a piece of paper, turn off the TV and other noise, go someplace alone and quiet, refer back to your Want/Need table and dig deep to come up with some written answers to, or at least, initial stabs at answers to the following questions:

1. What things/attributes/characteristics do I really need?
2. What things/attributes/characteristics do I merely want?
3. Why do I want each thing I say I want? What do I think each item would “give” me?
4. If I “got” what I think each item I want would “give” me, what, in turn, would that “give” me?
5. Keep asking, for each answer to question # 4, “and what would that give me?” until you get to the root desires of your heart. List them.
6. Look at the root desires you listed. If you are like most people those desires are probably one or more of the following: happiness, contentment, peace, security, love, joy, etc. Now ask yourself “has my past history of envying others every *really* brought me any closer to my deepest desires?”
7. Write down all the things, attributes, characteristics, and achievements you currently have.
8. Imagine all of these items are articles of clothing. In your imagination, take off each piece of clothing by crossing through each item on your list that you will be forced to leave behind you when you die.
9. What is left on your list? Draw a circle around that or, if there is nothing left, keep digging until you can find the deepest, core part of you that is you. If you struggle with this seek help from someone you think has a handle on their healthy core self.
10. The part that remains after all the outer things are stripped away—the part of you that has no “clothes”—is the core you. Knowing that this core you has far fewer real needs than wants, ask yourself “so what do I *really* need to become a healthy person?” What do I want to be remembered as or for? What do I want my legacy to be?

11. Think about whom, in your world, seems to exhibit the same kind of attributes you feel are what you want your legacy to be. Write their names down. Have these people or their characteristics impressed you? How? Can you be glad they have these attributes and be inspired to work on developing these yourself?
12. You are now admiring rather than envying. How does it feel? What would be your next step in working to develop any of these admired attributes/characteristics in your own life? Make a list of some things you could start doing, stop doing, or continue doing to develop them. Plan when you will talk to the people you admire and ask for their help and advice.

If you completed these twelve questions you got some real insight into who you really are and who you want to become. You also went back to the fork in the road, where envy and admiration first diverged, and stepped on the path of admiration and away from the road of envy. You've already taken some very good steps down the path of admiration and have the start of a plan for how to continue. You are on your way. Watch yourself, your thoughts, your behaviors, and your attitudes as you go forward and be aware that your ego is not dead but will spring out at the most unexpected time. When it does, name it, point it out to yourself and say:

No, I won't let you have control of my mind again. I won't let my unhealthy ego tell me lies that everything I want is what I need and why life has been so unfair to me and how if I will just get some really good envy going I will somehow get what I think I want. I don't and won't believe those lies any more. I remember my history with envy and know that it is a product of my ego. I know that it is a liar, that it never delivers what it promises, and that the energy of envy isn't lost but is converted only into more resentment, bitterness, anger, and victimhood. I am not running that nasty process again. I want a different conversion product and so I'm going to start with a different energy input. I'm going to put in admiration and get out a life worth living—a life that I can admire.

Let's sum up what we discussed in this chapter. Energy of all types does things, effects change, and is then changed into other forms of energy. Energy is neither lost nor gained, only converted (the 1st Law of Thermodynamics). Envy is emotional energy that comes from a profound lack of clarity about who you are and what you need and want. This negative energy is converted into crippling resentment. It weakens you. Admiration is also emotional energy. It becomes possible as the "other road" when you become much clearer about who you really are, what you really need, and who you would like to become. This positive energy is converted into gratitude, inspiration, desire, and commitment. It strengthens you. Both envy and admiration operate according to the thermodynamic laws but because those laws are harder to remember and maybe harder to apply in a specific moment in your day, remember something shorter instead that sums up everything you have learned. Remember the 8th Law of Life: *Envy cripples you.*

Now, what can you start admiring?