

# 7 Laws of Enough: Cultivating a Life of Sustainable Abundance

A book excerpt by Mobius Transformational Faculty member Jennifer Cohen and Mobius Coach Gina LaRoche

**FOREWORD** *The Seven Laws of Enough* invites you to explore the nourishing wellspring of enough. By connecting us to the taproot of sustainable abundance, Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen offer each of us the opportunity to feel strong, whole, blessed, at ease, and able to rest in the profound fullness of life itself.

This book is a powerful pathway to the life we all dream of.

In order to find our way to this blissful outcome, Gina and Jennifer first wisely plunge us into awareness of the “myths of scarcity,” a set of unconscious, unexamined assumptions that govern our lives without us even knowing it. They show us how we live in a consumer society that promotes the cultural conditioning and pervasive mind-set of “scarcity.” This mind-set makes us believe that we are unworthy or “less than” until we acquire more of anything and everything. We find ourselves lost in the treacherous terrain of scarcity, constantly vying for more but never feeling that more is the “enough” we are hoping for.

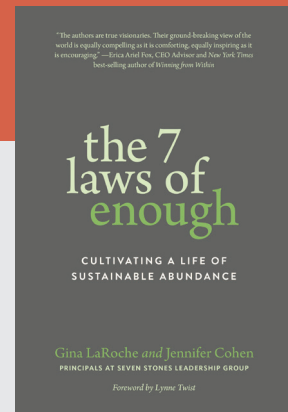
All the while, the source of “enough” or “sufficiency” and a life of sustainable abundance is within our grasp — waiting patiently for our attention.

Delving in to a body of distinctions created by my own mentor, Buckminster Fuller, years ago, and developed and practiced powerfully by the Hunger Project, *The Seven Laws of Enough* lays out practices that help us orient, anchor, and find ourselves living and expressing true sufficiency, the exquisite experience of being and having enough.

Allow the message of this book to bless your life and liberate you from the tyranny of not enough time, not enough money, not enough love, not enough sleep, and the feeling of not “being” enough.

The thoughtful practices in this book will help you see how true abundance flows from enough, never from more. Follow the sound and sage words that follow and your life can be an expression of contentment, gratitude, light, and love.

Lynne Twist, author of *The Soul of Money*



## INTRODUCTION

### A Radical Decluttering

You are in *The Matrix*. You are offered a blue pill and a red pill. The first lets you continue on in your life as is. The second promises access to the truth about existence, the whole unadulterated truth. Which do you choose? In the Matrix version, the truth turns out to be that we humans are grown and harvested to feed energy to the dominating machines.

Knowing this, we probably want that blue pill. But, what if the truth is the opposite of such a sour reality? What if the truth is that everything is OK? Like, Garden of Eden OK?

It's hard to imagine. But it is the truth of sufficiency. Here are the facts: there is enough food, air, water, and other necessities for every human being on the planet to live a quality life, full of resources and abundance. In 1970, Buckminster Fuller, the architect and futurist, predicted that it would take us fifty years to see this. And, now, almost exactly fifty years later, we still haven't accepted this. Nor have we begun to organize ourselves to reflect the fact that there is enough. We believe it's time to go public with this message and to share the truth.

Here is this book in a nutshell: You are enough. You do enough. You have enough, already. If you were to orient to life, to your team, your family, and society as if that were true, we guarantee you would see life in a whole new way. You would ask different questions and frame problems differently. New solutions would emerge.

Our “modern” society is already scaring the pants off of us and making us feel bad for who we are and what we do or don't have. But fear and shame aren't conducive to positive change. To help counteract them, we'll paint a picture of what is already available to us. Let us peel back the layers of distortion we have grown up and been trained in and bask in the bounty available to us.

We call this bounty “sustainable abundance.” Sustainable: ethical, reciprocal, just. Abundance: grateful, radiant, and present to the bounty everywhere.

As we have reflected on our own paths to living lives of sustainable abundance, we have developed a framework that we call the “Seven Laws of Enough,” which offers a map of the territory ahead.

**LAW 1: Stories Matter.** We are living in a web of stories, most of them not of our own making. We'll help you go from being stuck in your inherited stories to being the author of stories that further your life's purpose.

**LAW 2: I Am Enough.** You are. I am. We are. When we stop questioning our birthright everything shifts.

**LAW 3: I Belong.** Everyone does. No one has the right to tell us otherwise. We live in a culture that teaches us we're separate and has a vested interest in making us feel as if we don't belong.

**“Stories hold such a powerful place in the brain that it does not often register anything outside the story line. The brain is designed to look for evidence to support the stories we think are true. This means stories filter our world, shaping the landscape we see and all that we miss.”**

**LAW 4: No One Is Exempt.** We're set free when we accept impermanence and face what is finite and infinite. This helps us see through the lies of scarcity.

**LAW 5: Resting Is Required.** Society encourages us to be overworked, overmedicated, overfed, undernourished, and terrified. We crave the kind of deep rest we have almost lost. We can and must reclaim it.

**LAW 6: Joy Is Available.** We can find deep and abiding joy when we see clearly, let go of the lies, and notice what we have already.

**LAW 7: Love Is the Answer.** This is the final law and our deepest truth. Love is the answer to the questions that plague our society and close our hearts.

Our aim for you is pure and simple: guiding you to a way of being in your life so you feel powerful, at ease, able to rest in life itself. When you are done reading, we hope you will know what is enough for you.

In each chapter, we will give you an opportunity to learn a new practice, to unwind from habits that no longer serve you, and connect you directly to the well of enough that's waiting for each of us.

But reading isn't enough. You must make an everyday practice of being who you wish to be, and living how you wish to live. It requires that you continually unlearn bad habits from a culture of

scarcity, and persistently engage in learning new ones. This is the gym of your life. We invite you to a lifetime membership.

### Our First Workout

So here is our first practice. Gratitude, or thankfulness, provides us with an immediate and direct experience of sustainable abundance. Let's begin.

Take a deep breath and grab a pen and paper if you like. List seven things for which you are grateful in your life right now. If seven is easy, go for fourteen. If fourteen is easy, go for twenty-one. Now for a stretch: think of someone or something you don't currently feel gratitude for. Bring to mind the person or situation. Breathe and see if you can find any gratitude at all for the people or situation involved.

### TAKING THE SCARE OUT OF SCARCITY

We have the power to take the "scare" out of "scarcity." We can stop buying into the myths and lies of our time. "Not enough" and "too much" are just stories that people have created — stories we can change.

### What Is "Enough"?

Asking, "What is enough?" implies that you can answer the question for yourself. When you do, you've taken the first step on your own path — you can stop endlessly seeking more.





*Enough* is a declaration of something *beyond never enough*. *Enough* is a possibility. *Enough* is a truth. *Enough* is now. *Enough* already!

When we find ourselves dwelling in the past or worried about the future we are in a scarcity story. *Enough* is a gateway to a world where we can rest, recalibrate, and rewrite our lives.

There's not one single right definition of *enough*. It's about what's *enough* for you. Once you figure that out, you can wake up and choose your own life. Otherwise, you may end up drifting along in someone else's scarcity story. A story that's not yours can't be the source of your true happiness, or provide a path to a just and sustainable planet.

*Enough is not about dictating amounts or a particular lifestyle. It is a point of view, a context for the way we orient to ourselves, to one another, organizations, and life itself.*

The actions we choose to take will look different for each of us. For some of us this means getting rid of our clutter, giving away old clothes, downsizing our homes, emptying our storage units, and simplifying our lives.

### The Sounds of Scarcity

Let's put our thoughts and fears on loudspeaker for a moment. Stop and really listen to the clamor in your head and all around you. This is what we hear every day, all day: "If only I had more time... If I could just have a minute to myself... If only I could afford... If only I were thinner, smarter, faster, richer... then... then I'd be ok, feel better, do the things I really want to do...THEN, I'd be happy! But I'm so tired. *I need more* sleep. More exercise. A better body. Plastic surgery. A nicer, sexier, richer mate. More closet space. New clothes. New phone. New car."

Or maybe the flip side:

"*I have too much* to do. I am drowning. My house is a mess with clutter. I am so overwhelmed. I will never get it all done in time. If I only had one more day in the week or twenty-six hours in a day, then. . . ."

On and on the story goes. We want more time, more space, more sex, more money, *always* more

money. No matter how much we have, there is never ever enough money.

*Sound familiar?*

Ever hear of the allegory about two fish friends swimming in the ocean? A third fish swims by, greets the friends, and says, "Nice water today." After a few moments one fish turns to his friend and says, "Water? What's water?"

This is our human situation. The water we swim in can be hard to notice. But once we do see it, we have the opportunity to choose something else. That is what happened to us. When we saw the scarcity, its pervasiveness and tenacity, we knew we wanted something different. We hope you will too.

We're stuck in the cycle of consumption. They get rich. You get tired. Their stock price goes up. Your energy drops. They own your mind. You own lots of stuff. You might periodically get the urge to sell it or put it in bags for Goodwill. Or, like so many others, you might keep accumulating and hoarding, letting it fill your houses to the point where nothing more fits. Now you must acquire more space and put stuff in storage because you can't imagine letting it go. You can't afford the stuff or the storage fees. You find yourself in debt, struggling and suffering, caught by an inability to let go, slow down, and stop.

But wait, there's more! Being a workaholic is now considered a badge of honor. We brag about how hard we work (at work, at the gym, as a parent . . .) to prove we are all right.

Whew. Exhausting.

We are playing a game of unlimited consumption that we can't win. We think we can win by outspending, outworking, and outtraveling "the Joneses." After all of our effort and striving, we still feel something is missing. Success, and its constant companion, the quest for more, leaves us tired and afraid.

Annie Leonard, creator of the film *The Story of Stuff*, speaks to our "more is better" lifestyle. She says, "[It] is not even making us happy along the way. It would be one thing if we were having a great time plundering our natural habitat and endlessly consuming. But we are the least happy, most overfed, and undernourished people in history."

### Three Levels of Scarcity

In our work we've found three levels of scarcity:

1. **Personal scarcity.** I am not enough. I am not smart enough, sexy enough, wise enough, fast enough, skinny enough, accomplished enough. You get the picture.
2. **Interpersonal scarcity.** You are not enough. And, "If you would just, [fill in the blank here with either something you want that person to start doing or stop doing], then it or you would be ok." This kind of scarcity is pervasive in intimate relationships and in our workplaces. "If they had been faster, smarter, more efficient, then we would not be in this pickle."
3. **Structural scarcity.** This scarcity is built into the system so that for some people, there is really and truly not enough.

All three of these levels of scarcity are operating at the same time. Those of us who have enough to fulfill our needs and some of our wants may live in constant fear that we could lose it all. So, we hold on tight to what we have, and focus on accumulating more so we are never in the position of those who do not have enough to pay the bills.

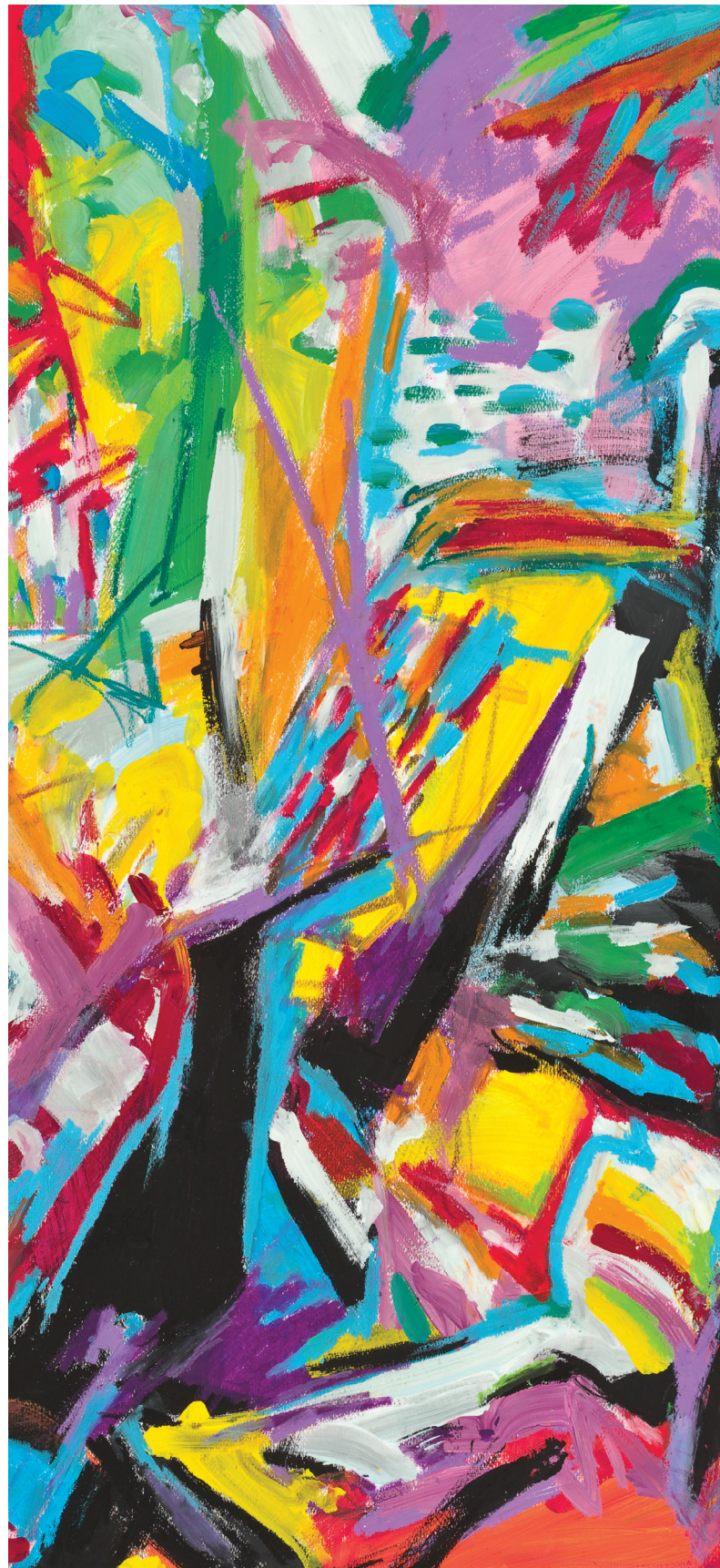
### HOW WE GOT HERE

#### A bit of biology

Our brains have evolved, in part, to search for danger. To do this successfully we instinctively sort for what is different, unusual, or not within the norm. As hunter-gatherers, danger took the shape of a tiger chasing us or another tribe at war with us. We had to constantly search for food and water resources, sometimes requiring a tribe or community to pack up and move elsewhere.

Today, those "tigers" can look like our bosses at work, our competitors who have more resources than we do, and people trying to get ahead of us literally or figuratively.

Beyond that thrust for survival is something else built into us: the capacity to dream, to long, to feel awe, to desire. We seek to reach, to go beyond where we are currently. Following these desires helps us identify, understand, locate, and own our power. By using our power effectively, we help take the scare out of scarcity.





**Society encourages us to be overworked, overmedicated, overfed, undernourished, and terrified. We crave the kind of deep rest we have almost lost. We can and must reclaim it.**

### **Human history and the birth of separation**

Human beings were initially nomadic and some still are. Hunting and gathering was the chief method for sustaining human life. We did not store much, if any, food for long periods.

Around ten thousand years ago, many human beings started to cultivate crops. This enabled us to stay in one place, settle and own land. With ownership came the need to defend the land and crops against those who might wish to take them. With agriculture came monarchies, with royalty came cities, and with cities and revolutions came centralized government. It was a steady march to the sea of scarcity from there.

### **Separating Ourselves**

As our physical biology changed, as well as the social structure of society, we began to see human life as separate from and dominant over all other life. We separated ourselves from nature. We separated mind from body, thinking from feeling. David Loy, a Buddhist teacher, says it well, “The delusive sense of a separate self inside will always be experienced as ungrounded and therefore insecure, so there is also going to be this sense that something is missing. I think that helps explain our obsession with things like money, fame, appearance, and so forth. Thanks to this gnawing sense of lack, we never feel rich enough, famous enough, or beautiful enough.”

*What choices would we make — and how would we conduct ourselves — if we knew we were all connected? If we remembered our actions matter, our lives matter, and our conduct affects all of life?*

This “myth of separation” is costing us in ways that are staggering to our health, our well-being,

our planet, and each other. War, human trafficking, genocide. Pollution, global warming, mass species extinction, all arise from a belief that we are separate and “better than.”

### **The Siren Song of Consumption**

Have you noticed how often people are referred to as “consumers”? We constantly hear references to consumer confidence, consumer spending, consumer trends, consumer price indexes, and consumer habits.

John Monczunski writes in *Notre Dame Magazine*, “Consuming has become our identity, and if we don’t do it at the appropriate time, to the appropriate (excessive) degree, something must be wrong.”

Our consumption-based society started with the Industrial Revolution and its legacy of production for the sake of profit. Excess manufacturing capacity after World War II and abundant natural resources made things more readily available. By the 1950s people were consuming more than they had done in Earth’s entire history.

Industry in a capitalistic economy invented the consumption cycle: extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. With planned obsolescence, businesses created disposable goods and then manufactured desire for the latest and greatest of everything.

We have witnessed the dramatic rise of brand names, and “logo branded” merchandise with the logo being the selling point. Now we associate our belonging to a class or tribe with the products we buy. We are literally buying our belonging and social status.

We fuel our consumption and unchecked growth with money we don’t have to buy things we probably don’t need.

### The System in Action

Let's talk about diamonds. In the 1930s, less than 10 percent of women received a diamond engagement ring. Today about 80 percent of women receive a diamond. During the past eighty years, the diamond industry manufactured a story of value, scarcity, and status. They've convinced us that buying a diamond ring is an essential step toward a life of true happiness. But the message is much more insidious: the bigger the diamond, the bigger your love. If your friend's diamond engagement ring is bigger, that surely means their fiancé loves them more than yours does. This is the weapon of comparison. Its goal is to drive you to buy something you don't need, something that won't make you happy, and put you in debt for no good reason.

Scarcity is also woven into how money is created and distributed. In the 2009 documentary *The Money Fix*, Belgian economist Bernard Lietaer discusses how scarcity lives in our banking system. Every dollar in our system is actually debt. Money is created when someone incurs a debt and uses the banks to finance that debt. The money is kept scarce by charging interest on it. There is always less money than is needed in the system to pay back the debt. We have created an inherent deficiency in the money supply.

### MYTHS OF SCARCITY AND EXCESS

Our fear of scarcity is so ingrained we start to believe "this is just the way it is." In *The Soul of Money: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life*, Lynne Twist writes, "It's not you and me. It's you or me, and if I have more access to resources and money and labor, I win and you lose." Twist calls this thinking a "myth" because of the power these assumptions have over us.

#### Lynne Twist's Three Toxic Myths of Scarcity

- 1) There is not enough.
- 2) More is better.
- 3) That's just the way it is.

### Three Myths of Excess

In the scarcity story, we believe more of everything will cure what ails us. This comes from three additional myths we call the myths of excess:

- You can have it all (people make a pretense of it).
- Having it all will make you happy (Instagram lets us edit our lives and only show the good parts — real life can't compete).
- If you do not have it all or you aren't happy, then it's your fault.

These myths keep us in a cycle of consumption and confusion. Even those of us who are aware of the problem continue to struggle to get out from underneath the power of the myths. And while consuming is not wrong, we are grossly out of balance with the other activities of being human.

### THE LIES WE TELL OURSELVES

Have you ever heard yourself say, out loud or in your head: "When I lose those last five, ten, twenty-five pounds, then I will feel good"? "Once we buy the house, then . . ."? "Once I get a new job, then . . ."?

We often think that a specific change will be the thing that pushes us over the edge into happiness! We believe happiness is just a matter of "more." More money, things, experiences, relationships.

Yet, has this been true for you? Have you lost the weight, gotten the fancier job, gotten the "perfect" relationship and then found yourself in a lasting state of greater joy and sustainable peace?

Be careful here in answering this because many of us have become confused. We are talking about real abiding happiness and joy, not momentary pleasure or satisfaction (which, by the way, we aren't knocking). As author Oliver Burkeman cites, "What's promised by positive thinking and conventional self-help, which seems aimed more at an unbroken state of excitement" is a fallacy.

Advertisers *promise* that our Subaru will connect us to love, or our experiences at Zappos will deliver happiness. We hope and pray that if we spin our thoughts in a particular direction — control their flow and tone and content — we will arrive at a steady, optimal, happy state. In the myths of excess we believe that more things will make us happy. The truth is, once our basic needs are met and we have some extra for fun and security, most research says the further accumulation of stuff not only does not make us happy, it can have the opposite effect.

## IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

There is a false belief that we are all born on the same starting line and have an equal chance of winning the money game. If you miss out, so the thinking goes, you must be lazy, stupid, or both. Yet that's often not true. Companies downsize, jobs move or disappear. There are actual issues of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that can work against you.

We get depressed, addicted, hopeless, and angry. No matter our "intentions" and even our hard work, we can't guarantee success and wealth. You can do all the "right" things and still not get the results you want every time or in the time you thought you would. That's life.

But living and working from a scarcity mind-set doesn't work in the long term, and isn't necessary. You don't need to have it all — you need to find what makes you happy (easier said than done, but worth the effort).

In *The Soul of Money*, Twist recounts a story of meeting and listening to the renowned futurist and thinker Buckminster Fuller who predicted that the world would be making a shift from what he termed a "you or me" mind-set to a mind-set of "you *and* me."

That Fuller's predictions are starting to come true is evidenced by today's "sharing economy." We each don't have to own everything — we can share with others. Think of Lyft and Uber, Zipcar and car2go: they all let you share someone else's car. Airbnb, Couchsurfing, VRBO, and more: they let you share someone else's home.

Those car- and house-sharing models are the very definition of "you *and* me." We both win: the "consumers" win by getting what we need without having to make big investments. The "providers" win in getting help to pay for what they own. The sharing economy helps us see that there is enough, that more is not better, and "just the way it is," is old thinking.

## THE WEAPONS OF SCARCITY

There are weapons being deployed to keep us under control. We call these the "weapons of scarcity." They play us, even when we think we're smart enough not to fall for them. Yet even the smartest of us fall

into these traps. We've alphabetized this list — but shame and fear tend to be the biggest weapons. Then each of us falls victim to a different weapon of choice depending on the circumstance.

<i>Alienation</i>	<i>Failure</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
<i>Comparison</i>	<b><i>Fear</i></b>	<i>Self-loathing</i>
<i>Competition</i>	<i>Hoarding</i>	<b><i>Shame</i></b>
<i>Contraction</i>	<i>Hostility</i>	<i>Silence</i>
<i>Discord</i>	<i>Immediate and</i>	<i>Silence</i>
<i>Distraction</i>	<i>short term</i>	<i>Uncertainty</i>
<i>Doubt</i>	<i>Impatience</i>	<i>What isn't</i>
<i>Either/Or</i>	<i>Jealousy</i>	<i>Worry</i>
	<i>Resentment</i>	

Each of us may find that one weapon is more often deployed against us — or even by us. We may notice that a few are operating at all times and have become personal weapons of mass destruction.

Resentment, for example, is a pervasive weapon of scarcity and we use it against others and ourselves. Once we get a sense of which weapons we most often employ we can begin to catch ourselves starting to wander into scarcity territory.

Comparison can be a potent weapon. We can struggle, always wondering if we measure up to expectations of parents, siblings, teachers, mentors, or colleagues. A friend of ours shared how the comparison weapon led her to a pair of earrings and an aha moment:

*I knew two women who traveled a lot on foreign vacations. They would go to Europe, the Caribbean, or Asia at least once a year, and sometimes twice. I so envied their ability to go on these trips, while I was home childrearing and working to feed my family. One year, they traveled to Hong Kong, and each returned with beautiful sapphire and diamond earrings. They took my breath away. I knew right then that I would be happy and all would be well if I had earrings like that. I expressed my delight with the jewelry, and they even encouraged me to buy a pair because they were so happy with their earrings.*

*I pestered my husband to buy me said earrings for Christmas that year. We went shopping for them together. When we walked into the jewelry store, I was thrilled. We asked to see earrings just like the ones that my friend had bought. Out they came on the tray and my heart sank. They were way beyond what we could*



*afford. However, by then I was hooked and knew that any sapphire earrings would make me happy. I had to have some. We picked out a tiny pair of stud earrings and brought them home.*

*When I wore them, I discovered that they did not indeed make me happy. In fact, they made me feel ridiculous. I've kept those earrings in my jewelry box for thirty years.*

*Whenever I see someone who has an expensive sparkly possession that creates a deep twinge of envy in me, I do two things: I compliment them on their beautiful possession; and I take out my sapphire stud earrings and remember that feeling of emptiness after I bought them. I am not against sparkly expensive things — however, I have learned the lesson that happiness is never born out of a feeling of envy of not having.*

So not only do we deploy these weapons toward ourselves and in our relationships, the marketing machine of our economy uses them as fuel to support our overconsumption and distorted relationship to true happiness.

### **ARE YOU STUCK IN THE SCARCITY STORY?**

One way to see this is to return to how we opened this chapter, to recall your first thoughts from this morning. Were they something like, “I didn’t get

enough sleep,” or “I don’t have enough time to...”? Did you grab your mobile phone to get started on work before your feet hit the floor?

Now reread the myths: You can have it all, having it all will make you happy, and if you do not have it all or you are not happy, it’s your fault.

As you read through these cultural assumptions that we live with as if they were real, start noticing your thoughts, body sensations, and emotions.

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*Just noticing how we react to scarcity stories can shift our relationship with them.*

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If we can make it a practice to become aware of these myths at play in our own life and the lives of others, then we can start to unwind from the toxicity of living a life in scarcity. We invite you to drop your scarcity story and join us.

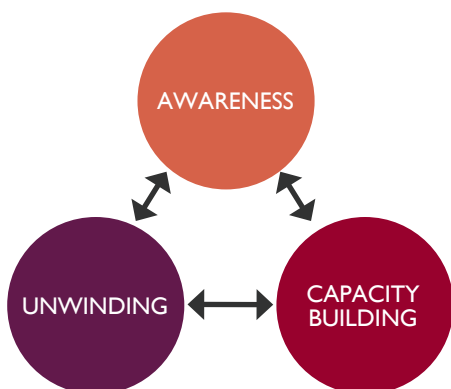
### **PRACTICE. PRACTICE. PRACTICE.**

The key to unwinding from scarcity is realizing that life is a learning journey. We learn through practice, and we have choices about what and how we practice.



## STRUCTURE SHAPES BEHAVIOR

When we practice, we get good at whatever it is we are practicing. This means we even get good at things we are doing unwittingly, or things that no longer serve us. There are three elements to breaking old habits and crafting new ones:



With **awareness** we begin by tracking the sensations we feel and the thoughts and images that arise in our day-to-day lives. We don't need to add to the experience; we can just witness and acknowledge what is happening. This gives us the ability to move through the world by choice rather than reaction and recrimination. We use both self-reflections and inquiry to increase awareness.

Typically, for **unwinding** to happen, we must interrupt our normal behaviors and habits and do something different and then watch and listen. We can engage with a safe person to help guide us. Sometimes we can do it on our own, but it requires safety and an opening to let what needs healing to come forward.

For **capacity building**, we deliberately repeat an action with commitment to strengthen what is there or fill in what is missing. Capacity building takes time. Dabbling with a practice once or twice will very likely not yield much for you. Patience, time, and repetition are required to produce lasting results.

These three elements combined support and interact with each other so we can develop new declarations, write new stories, and take new actions. Let us practice intentionally. Together. ■



**Gina Laroche** is Mobius Executive Coach and an organizational leadership consultant, facilitator and executive coach. She is a co-founder of Seven Stones Leadership Group with

Jennifer Cohen. Gina leverages 25 years of experience in delivering executive programs that have challenged leaders, teams and entrepreneurs to accelerate results using vision, strategy and accountability. Her current interest is working with leaders to develop mindfulness and presence for themselves and bringing these practices into organizations. She has spoken at Wisdom 2.0 Business conference and at the Mindful Leadership Summit. She is the co-author of *The Seven Laws of Enough* and author of *Living in Sufficiency: A Daily Journey and Unstuck: Make the Shift*.



**Jennifer Cohen** is a member of the Mobius Transformational Faculty and a founding member of its Global Coaching Practice. She is also the co-founder of Seven Stone Leadership Group,

a consulting consortium, where she teaches a unique model of leadership development and is pioneering work in moving organizations and individuals to a partnership model of living and leading. She is certified as a Master Coach by the Strozzi Institute for Learning. Jennifer co-authored *The Seven Laws of Enough*, a chapter in the text *Being Human at Work: Bringing Somatic Intelligence into Your Professional Life* and regularly contributes to the *Mobius Strip*. We are honored to have Jennifer as NPI Faculty since our inaugural Gathering.