

Chapter 6: Scarcity Addiction

Page 1: The Addiction Nobody Talks About

Scarcity is the most socially acceptable addiction we have.

We call it "being careful." "Planning ahead." "Being responsible." "Staying humble."

But underneath these reasonable labels lives something much darker: a hungry ghost that's always eating, never full, convinced the next bite might finally satisfy the endless craving for "enough."

I discovered my own scarcity addiction during what should have been the best financial period of my life. I was making more money than ever, had multiple income streams, savings in the bank. By every external measure, I was winning.

And I was miserable.

Not sad miserable. Anxious miserable. That constant low-level panic of someone who's convinced disaster is always one mistake away.

I'd check my bank balance multiple times a day. Not because I needed to know the numbers, but because I needed the hit of temporary relief that came from seeing money there. Then, hours later, the anxiety would creep back in. What if that client doesn't pay? What if the economy crashes? What if I lose everything?

The strangest part? The more I earned, the stronger the scarcity became.

It was like my inner survival system couldn't compute the abundance, so it created phantom famines to justify its existence.

I'd sit in my beautiful apartment, surrounded by everything I thought I wanted, feeling emptier than when I had nothing. Because here's what nobody tells you about scarcity: it's not about what you have. It's about what you're addicted to feeling.

The breakthrough came during a particularly intense hoarding episode. I'd just received a huge client payment and immediately went into panic mode. What if they asked for it back? What if no more clients came? What if, what if, what if...

I found myself at the grocery store at 10 PM, loading my cart with bulk rice and beans, when I suddenly saw myself clearly: a grown man with money in the bank, preparing for a famine that existed only in his mind.

I left the cart in the aisle and sat in my car, shaking. Not from fear, but from recognition.

I wasn't preparing for scarcity. I was creating it. Feeding it. Keeping it alive because it was the only relationship with resources I'd ever known.

Growing up in post-Soviet Lithuania, scarcity wasn't just an economic reality—it was a survival strategy. You hoarded what you could, when you could, because you never knew when it would be available again.

But I wasn't in Soviet Lithuania anymore. I was a successful entrepreneur in the modern economy. And I was still living like the shelves might empty at any moment.

That night, I made a decision that would take years to fully implement: I would learn to recognize scarcity not as truth, but as addiction.

And like any addiction, the first step was admitting I had a problem.

Reflection Exercise: Your Scarcity Signals

Right now, think about your relationship with "enough":

- What do you hoard "just in case"?
- When do you feel that familiar scarcity panic?
- Where in your life does "never enough" show up most strongly?

Page 2: The Museum of Maybe

Marta contacted me with what she called "a storage situation."

"I have 47,000 unread emails," she confessed during our first call. "Four external hard drives full of free courses I've never opened. Twelve bookshelves of books I'll read 'someday.' My Google Drive is at 97% capacity with PDFs I've downloaded 'just in case.'"

But that wasn't why she called.

"I just got evicted," her voice cracked. "Because I couldn't let them in to fix a leak. There's no room. I've filled every inch with... possibilities."

Marta was 38, brilliant, educated. She'd spent the last decade collecting instead of creating. Every free webinar, every discounted course, every "limited time offer" felt like a life raft in her ocean of not-enough-ness.

"When did this start?" I asked.

"2008," she said immediately. "The financial crisis. I lost my job, my savings, everything. I promised myself I'd never be unprepared again."

So she prepared. And prepared. And prepared.

Until preparation became procrastination, and procrastination became paralysis.

Her apartment was a monument to maybe:

- Maybe this course will change everything
- Maybe this book has the answer
- Maybe this resource will finally be enough
- Maybe if I have everything, I'll be safe

"Show me your bank account," I said gently.

She resisted. The shame was overwhelming. When she finally shared her screen, the numbers told a different story than her hoarding suggested: She had six months of expenses saved. Her freelance business was thriving. She wasn't poor—she was terrified of possibility.

"When did you last create something?" I asked. "Not collected. Created."

Long silence. "I... I can't remember."

This is scarcity's cruelest trick. It convinces you that you need more before you can begin. More knowledge, more resources, more preparation. But "more" is a moving target. There's always another course, another book, another thing to acquire before you're "ready."

Marta had become a curator of other people's creations, building a museum to visit but never a studio to work in. She was hoarding potential while her actual life shrank smaller and smaller, crushed under the weight of infinite maybes.

The problem wasn't that she lacked resources. The problem was that she lacked trust in life's inherent abundance. She was so focused on hypothetical future scarcity that she couldn't experience the present moment's richness.

Her "preparedness" was actually a sophisticated form of procrastination. A way to feel productive while avoiding the vulnerable act of creation.

Reflection Exercise: Your Collection Habits

Be honest:

- What do you collect but never use?
- How many courses, books, or resources are you "saving for later"?
- What are you hoarding that's actually preventing you from taking action?

Page 3: The Preparation Trap

We live in the age of infinite input. Every day, the internet offers thousands of free courses, millions of articles, endless podcasts, unlimited "essential" resources.

For someone with scarcity addiction, it's like putting an alcoholic in a liquor store with no closing time.

The preparation trap works like this:

Stage 1: The Trigger - Something activates your not-enough program. Could be a bill, a comparison, a memory. Suddenly you feel behind, unprepared, lacking.

Stage 2: The Hunt - You search for the thing that will fill the gap. The course that will make you enough. The book that holds the answer. The resource that will finally complete you.

Stage 3: The High - You find it! Download it! Save it! For a moment, you feel safe. Prepared. Ready. The anxiety eases.

Stage 4: The Crash - Hours, days, or weeks later, you realize you haven't actually used what you collected. The high fades. The emptiness returns, stronger than before.

Stage 5: The Shame Spiral - You berate yourself for not following through. Which triggers more feelings of not-enough. Which sends you back to Stage 1.

Round and round, collecting but never creating, preparing but never performing.

I've seen this pattern in myself, particularly with this very book. For years, writing it felt like an "open app" consuming my processing power. I amassed notes, outlines, inspirations, constantly telling myself I needed more research, more time, more clarity before I could "spit it out."

This perfectionist complex—where ideas become so sacred that the pressure to execute them flawlessly becomes paralyzing—is a classic symptom of scarcity addiction. The bigger the dream, the

more vulnerable you are to never starting.

I worked with Marta for six months. The process wasn't about organizing her hoard or even deleting it. It was about understanding what she was really collecting: evidence that she wasn't ready. Proof that she needed more before she could begin.

"What if you have everything you need right now?" I asked one day.

She laughed bitterly. "That's impossible."

"Prove it. Create something. Today. With only what you currently know."

"But I should review my materials first—"

"No. Create first. Review never."

She sat in silence for a full minute. I could see her addiction fighting for control, listing all the reasons she needed to prepare more.

Finally: "What if it's terrible?"

"Then it exists. Which is more than your 47,000 unread emails have achieved."

That afternoon, Marta wrote her first blog post in five years. It was messy, imperfect, and absolutely beautiful in its existence. She cried when she hit publish. Not from sadness, but from the relief of finally choosing creation over collection.

The preparation trap promises safety through accumulation. But safety doesn't come from having more. It comes from trusting what you already have.

Reflection Exercise: Your Preparation Patterns

Ask yourself:

- What are you perpetually preparing for but never starting?
- How many "someday" projects are collecting dust in your life?
- What would you create if you knew you already had everything you needed?

Page 4: Your Scarcity Inventory

It's time to look honestly at your own scarcity patterns. This isn't about judgment—it's about awareness. You can't heal what you won't acknowledge.

Physical Hoarding Check

Walk through your space. Notice:

- What do you have multiples of "just in case"?
- What expired items are you keeping?
- Which possessions are you storing for "someday"?
- What are you afraid to use up or throw away?

Digital Hoarding Check

Open your devices. Count:

- Unread emails
- Unused apps
- Downloaded but unwatched courses
- Saved articles you'll "read later"
- Photos you'll "organize eventually"

Mental Hoarding Check

Notice your thoughts:

- How many ideas are you "saving for later"?
- What projects are perpetually in planning?
- Which opportunities are you postponing?
- What are you waiting to feel "ready" for?

Financial Hoarding Check

Examine your money patterns:

- How much are you saving "for emergencies"?
- What expenses do you avoid despite having the money?
- Where do you underinvest in yourself or your goals?
- What financial opportunities are you postponing?

The goal isn't to shame yourself for any of this. The goal is to see the pattern clearly.

Scarcity addiction shows up as:

- **Accumulating without using**
- **Preparing without executing**
- **Saving without investing**
- **Learning without applying**
- **Planning without starting**

The Release Practice

This week, practice letting go:

Day 1-2: Delete 100 unread emails **Day 3-4:** Give away 10 items you're storing "just in case" **Day 5-6:** Start one project you've been preparing for **Day 7:** Spend money on something you've been avoiding

Notice what comes up. The anxiety. The resistance. The voice that says "but what if I need this someday?"

That voice is your scarcity addiction talking. Thank it for trying to keep you safe, then choose differently.

Page 5: The Abundance Gratitude Ritual

Breaking scarcity addiction isn't about forcing yourself to spend or give away everything. It's about rewiring your nervous system to recognize abundance that's already present.

The antidote to scarcity isn't more accumulation. It's more appreciation.

Daily Abundance Practice

Every morning, before checking your phone, your email, or your bank balance, spend five minutes in gratitude for what you already have:

Physical abundance: The roof over your head, the clothes on your body, the food in your kitchen.

Knowledge abundance: Everything you've learned, experienced, and discovered. You carry libraries of wisdom in your mind.

Relationship abundance: Every person who cares about you, who's influenced you, who's shared space with you.

Opportunity abundance: Every choice available to you today, every potential path, every door that could open.

Creative abundance: Your ability to think, imagine, create, and contribute something unique to the world.

The Flow Meditation

Once a week, practice this meditation:

Sit quietly. Close your eyes. Imagine abundance as a river flowing through your life.

See resources, opportunities, and energy flowing in. Feel yourself receiving with gratitude.

See yourself using, sharing, and circulating what you receive. Feel yourself giving with joy.

Notice the flow is continuous. What leaves creates space for what's coming. What you give away returns multiplied.

Feel yourself as part of this flow, not separate from it. Trust that the river is always flowing, always abundant, always enough.

The Creation Challenge

For the next 30 days, create something every single day with only what you currently have:

- Write a paragraph with the knowledge in your head
- Take a photo with your phone
- Cook a meal with ingredients you own
- Solve a problem with existing resources
- Share an insight you've already learned

The goal isn't perfection. It's practice. Practice trusting that you already have enough to begin.

Six months after our work together, Marta sent me a photo. Her apartment was clean, spacious, beautiful. But that wasn't what made me smile.

"I'm publishing my first course next week," she wrote. "Made entirely from knowledge I already had. Turns out I didn't need 47,000 emails to teach what I know."

Scarcity addiction promises security through accumulation. But true security comes from knowing that you are enough, you have enough, you know enough to begin.

Right now. Today. With what you currently possess.

The abundance you're seeking isn't in some future acquisition. It's in the conscious appreciation of what's already here.

And when you finally see it—really see it—the scarcity addiction dissolves like salt in water.

Because you realize the truth: there was never a shortage. There was only a failure to notice the overflow.

The key insight: Scarcity is not about what you lack. It's about what you fail to recognize as abundance.

Next up: Chapter 7, where we'll explore finding your personal "enough point"—the place where accumulation transforms into appreciation.