## Greed Is the Result of Overdetermined Need

Wouldn’t it be nice to be rich? So rich that you’d neer have to worry about money again? You could buy whatever you want, go anywhere you want, do whatever you want. No worries, no constraints, nothing to get in the way of ﬁnally being free of responsibility. All you needs met, your wishes, your whims. No more frustration, no more disappointment. It’d be Heaven, pure Heaven.

What a great fantasy, one we commonly have when we think of the wealthy. We believe they have it made. We hold them in awe and envy their lifestyle and money. We think about their ability to sleep in every morning, have breakfast on the veranda of their multi-million dollar homes, and spend their days in luxurious settings. We wish that we could have what they have. We wish that we could be rich, too.

Because we doubt that we will ever be rich, we see them as greedy and unwilling to share. We believe that they have become wealthy by hook and by crook. We believe that taxing them more will ease our ﬁnancial burden and bring balance to the culture. But we also believe that the wealthy are in power and will never relinquish their wealth. If only they weren’t so greedy.

### Explore the complexities of greed and its roots in unmet emotional needs. As a psychiatric counselor and mental health expert, I have described the psychology behind human behavior in my insightful book.

What we don’t understand is why some wealthy people (not all) are greedy. We don’t understand the reason they have pursued more wealth than they could ever use. We don’t see that many wealthy people are actually deprived.

Deprived? You heard me right. Greedy people have generally been deprived. Hard to believe, isn’t it? Well let’s take a look.

Self-made men and women have moved from rags to riches on their own. They are usually (but not always) entrepreneurs with successful companies, many of which have been sold to make room for the next good idea. They enjoy the rush associated with living on the edge and making big deals.

The self-made have been willing to sacriﬁce a great deal to succeed in business. They deprive themselves of time to relax, be with their families, and maintain good health. They tend to numb themselves to the wear and tear a fast pace generates and avoid feeling, sometimes with the help of substances that block sensations associated with stress and fatigue such as alcohol (an anesthetic), nicotine (a powerful stimulant) and cafeine (a potent energizer).

Self-made men and women thrive on the efects of high adrenaline levels. They are competitive and often very self-centered. They tend to use people and situations to feel gratiﬁed without concern for fairness or the impact of their actions on the

well-being of others. The self-made tend to value status, power, and money above all else, and generally never feel that they have enough of any of them.

The reason that many self-made men and women have dificulty feeling satisﬁed is that they use status, power, and material goods to ﬁll an internal void resulting from emotional deprivation when they were children. The emotional deprivation most often stems from a lack of accurate empathy and consistent need-meeting when they are children coupled with the self-imposed emotional deprivation stemming from a current lifestyle that precludes having their emotional needs met.

A second category of the ultrarich is their children who are known as trust-funders. They generally have distant relationships with their parents who have been too busy making money (as is usually the case with their fathers) and taking care of the accoutrements of having money such as the social calendar and charity work (as is usually the case with their mothers). Trust-funders are usually raised by nannies, most of whom are good at their jobs, but none of whom are their parents.

Self-made men and women attempt to satisfy their children’s emotional needs using the same means they use to meet their own. They provide materially in excess of what their children need, tend to set few limits, and given satisfaction substitutes in the form of unique experiences and a high standard of living. They make their children feel special by providing special environments and encouraging them to identify with a privileged class who are “superior” by virtue of their social positions and bank balances.

### Are you ready to uncover the hidden drivers of human desires and behaviors? In my book, I’ve revealed the emotional complexities that shape our lives, ofering life-changing insights from a psychiatric therapist's perspective.

Since self-made parents tend to view the world as full of predators, trust-funders are often given special protection in the bodyguards and/or special schools set apart from the dangerous “rif-raf” with whom the children might come into contact. This makes the children feel special but also fearful and untrusting of the outside world.

Trust-funders are often not taught to work even though their fathers and sometimes mothers work most of their waking hours. They are the recipients of the bounty and are seen by the parents as extensions of themselves and the family lineage.

Trust-funders often have trouble functioning independently outside the stockade of afluence. Their relationships tend to be shallow because of the prohibition against intimate involvement with outsiders and their parents’ message that relationships need not be based on meeting mutual emotional needs.

Unfortunately, self-made parents have dificulty empathizing accurately with others and frequently miss the mark when trying to meet their children’s emotional needs. This leaves a hunger inside trust-funders that can propel them into self-indulgence.

Trust-funders, like their parents, are left feeling empty inside, an emptiness they try to ﬁll with status, power, and money as adults. They are ill-equipped to stand on their own two feet and develop relationships that are co-dependent and unfulﬁlling. They tend to be narcissistic, somewhat arrogant, and entitled.

I have used the ultrarich to make a point, namely that greed is the result of unmet emotional needs during childhood. It is “overdetermined” meaning that needs of the past combine with needs in the present. Greedy people try to ﬁll their emptiness with material goods. This, of course, doesn’t work.

Greed is not exclusive to the ultrarich. It can be found in all socioeconomic groups. The same dynamic applies whether one is rich or poor. It manifests diferently when a person doesn’t have the material wherewithal that the rich have. It may show itself as relationships that are out of balance, addictions, thievery, hypersexuality, overzealous religious practices, and other ways that allow a person to avoid feeling the emptiness.

### Curious about how childhood experiences shape our adult behaviors, including greed? Read my book, where I, along with other mental health clinicians, explore the emotional landscapes that inﬂuence relationships and decisions.

Contrary to the famous movie quote, greed is not good. Emptiness is not a good feeling. Having to continually focus on ﬁlling a void is not a good way to live. There are better ways to rid oneself of the emptiness, but that’s another article.