

13 Paths to Poverty

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1. Be angry. Venting anger in a harmful manner is a choice, and it is one of the leading emotions when the chips are down and there is no money, not much relational support and life keeps kicking you in the teeth. There are right ways to go about dispelling the anger cloud but blowing up and becoming a d bag are not on that list ;). There is an avalanche of extra emotions during a layoff or a job loss or medical emergency and one of those found in surplus, is anger.

Lots of anger, lots of time to be angry, lots of excuses to make to justify anger, plenty of opportunity to peek at things in an angry way. The dog knocked over the water bowl, a child interrupted a job application online (we all know that this happens after tediously entering our life's information in little subject boxes!), a spouse trying to encourage but coming across as a nagging wife, the government stepping in and saying that one must do this that or the other to keep getting unemployment (we pay into it right? So why fiercely regulate that? Just curious), the guy on the highway who cut you off just to turn left directly while you are in the passing of a tractor (Ok, if you aren't from farming country, you wont understand this one at all!) and the overdue notices of the bill collectors. Not to mention the constant harassment and phone calls because a bill is 0.08 of a minute late... etc.

So, anger and blowing up and lashing out seems a very real natural consequence. It is a very harmful one though and it leads nowhere pretty. It may feel great in the heat of the moment but just wait and feel the remorse and guilt wash over you afterwards. Unless you are a sociopath with no conscience, in which case, I hope you aren't reading this! It leads to death eventually or sometimes immediately as the worst case scenario. It's smaller evils lead to a broken family, a wounded person, a destroyed object, a shattered existence, loneliness...etc.

What could we do instead? We could use that anger and go sand that front bumper that is in the garage with our bare hands. We could go and turn our headphones on and crank up our mix of songs that helps us. We could take a bike ride, a run or a series of martial arts katas if we are into that. The thing is, we make a choice and we are all aware of the consequences.

I admit, it is super hard when your heart is beating and sorrow is in your heart, the adrenaline is flowing and it seems like everything is wrong, but, hang in there. Choose wisely. Choose to use that feeling to propel you towards a force for good. Choose to do something constructive and not destructive. Let peace in after your anger has passed.

2. Lie. This one is sure to swivel some heads. It's tempting to look at that pesky job app and say, hey I could say I studied at Harvard and they may never know the truth but that is a mark against your character. It may not ever get revealed as the lie it is, but we both know that it eats at a regular persons conscience. It troubles a persons sleep and causes a rift and separation and several other things all at once.

It is so easy to stretch something that may never be verified, but it still doesn't make it right. We could say that we led the high school swim team as captain but our actions will eventually show themselves. We could tweak and fudge and all that to impress the people who make decisions on our behalf. Trust me, that never plays to our advantage.

Ok, as a personal example of this in action, I will tell you all this lie that I once told. Afterwards, I realized how utterly foolish it was but at the time, it seemed my only option. I was asked on a quiz for a job once if I had ever stolen anything. I lied. Flat out. I lied. I had stolen the greatest of all treasures, time. I had rushed through doing a job so I could have more time to hang out and smoke cigarettes. I had shut a machine down at a factory so I could sneak off and have a break. I had intentionally found a way to hack a system at a call center to shut down every single computer to get us all a break. Thereby costing my employer time and money and valuable productivity. Previously, at yet another job, I had taken food that did not belong to me. Turns out I have done some pretty crummy stuff to people. But, I think about all this now on almost every decision. I ask myself if this benefits my employer and my coworkers and my family and my friends and those people who truly need it. If my answer doesn't line up with good, I choose better. (For the record, my sincerest apologies to my former employers, I was a terrible employee even though I did an excellent job.) I didn't get the job because, I don't think I really wanted it in the first place, but more importantly, I wouldn't have been able to accept it due to my previous indiscretions. Not on good conscience anyway.

So, I challenge you to lie to no one. Not even yourself. One cannot say, I'm good at this thing when they are not good at it.

I have to chuckle at the sayings we tell to children. We say, "You can do whatever you want in this life." Then we realize that doesn't really speak the truth totally. One can never fly without the assistance of devices or aids or machines. We can't stand at the top of a cliff with no parachute and tell ourselves we can fly. Well, I guess we could but the result is the same. Death may result from lying to yourself. End of story.

A few solutions to this problem; if we are in this poverty landfill, or chaotic time and are passing through, we can remember to speak the truth. Speak it in love, speak it in the proper way, tone of voice, reflection of body language, private or in a group, on a job app, on the phone interview. I, would be happier knowing someone who can pinpoint

their faults and flaws as a human being than someone who puts themselves on a pedestal, thinking they do no wrong. So, just don't lie, have a better life.

3. Cheat. Some people cheat on their taxes, some people cheat on their spouse, some people cheat on tests and some even cheat on board games. You know the type who moves the Chinese checkers piece when you aren't looking and went to use the bathroom. Cheating leads us straight to poverty and not out of it. It is a surefire way to embrace defeat and allow life to continue kicking you in the teeth. It is not easy when people don't trust a person. Doors are shut and locked, windows are latched, cars are locked and alarmed, jobs aren't available, teachers aren't nearby for answers, mentors aren't going to look your way and life does not reward this character flaw.

Sure, one may go forward and have the look of success and get away with it but that is a slippery slope. Its not fun when it begins to turn on a person and it causes people to leave you alone and more vulnerable. That is probably the worst. When life kicks a person and they are left crying and huddled in the corner, they seek their friends and opportunities. In that moment or season, however, their "friends" aren't there, the opportunity doors are closed and it seems like all roads are blocked. Mostly due to a flaw that could be prevented, if we choose wiser from now forward. We choose every moment to do the right thing no matter the consequences.

Sometimes, cheating isn't so obvious, sometimes it is cutting corners or taking shortcuts.

I read awhile back that Burger King food company was accused of using horse meat in their Europe locations to save money. When people got wind of this, they shunned this company fiercely, with good reason. I think there was a boycott and a severe loss of trust. Once tarnished, a reputation is a hard thing to rebuild. It takes many apologies and many pleadings and many years of struggle to regain even a percentage point of what a person, or company, used to have.

What shortcuts are you trying to get you to where you feel you need to be? Are you hurting someone in the process or damaging your own reputation? Have you fudged some numbers or shuffled some things into offshore accounts? Now would be a great time to fix that. Or to stop it, go through the consequence and never to repeat that mistake again.

4. Steal. This one like the others, should be obvious, but still apparently shrouded in mystery. If one is stealing anything, there is a consequence. The housing crash of 2008 would be a big one. People and corporations were dipping their hands into some giant cookie pots thinking that everything was going to be ok and they could dip without

anyone knowing. Then, reality hit and BAM! This stealing led to a very real crash and fallout. People got hurt, families got broken up and a huge ripple of sorrow ensued.

In Iowa and the Midwest, it took some time to reach us and affect us on a day to day level, but eventually it would hit hard here as well. We would look around and notice a town with 300 houses would have 60 of them for sale and we could tell they were struggling. We didn't know their story, we didn't know their particular struggle. We didn't know if they were selling to prevent foreclosure or were going to be all right. We had no idea if they were paying that mortgage, living elsewhere and paying two sets of bills. None of us knew if one spouse was at one place and the other at the other place and how the kids were shuffled to and fro. We really couldn't tell from most outward appearances. Stealing really changed some things on a large scale. Just as stealing changes things if it is just one person doing it.

In middle school, I stole something and stuffed it down my pants thinking I would never ever be found at. It was a book. Not just any book, it would become my favorite childhood book. *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls. (Later Dave Matthews, of the Dave Matthews Band, would act the father in the movie version, that one is awesome!) It was one amazing story of saving, bootstrapping, dreaming and coming to life, coming of age and learning to be excellent. In my opinion it should be required reading, but I digress. I stole it from a book fair. My money situation was nil. My parents money situation was nil. I had not a chance in the world to get this book from my own perspective. I just knew I wanted this book that bad, that I had to have it. That night I had to be picked up by my parents and then had to face telling the truth to my very angry father. Yeah, I got a whooping. Yeah it hurt. But, I learned. Oddly enough, the school decided that I should keep the book. Not really sure why then but I get it now. One of the standout lessons of my youth.

In the movie *Gran Torino*, Clint Eastwood has this 1972 Ford Gran Torino in mint condition sitting in his garage. As a gang initiation, a young scared boy is told to go steal it. Clint's character hears a noise in his garage and loads his rifle to go take care of the problem. Well, the boy gets away and Eastwood fires a gun. Eventually, the boy's mother and sister bring him back next door to apologize and volunteer the boy to help him for one full week. Without giving the movie away, it really surprises me about the ending. The car is eventually to become a major life learning moment. That boy becomes a man because of that car and the events surrounding it.

Would we have the ability to say no to the shiny object or fancy phone, new car, sweet wheels, money from the drawer, a friends last pop, someone's last beer, a computer program, a music cd? I have been guilty of most of these things. I honestly say that at a certain point, I learned wisdom. I stopped stealing. Sadly, it was at the expense of a good number of hurts and later in life than I thought it would be. So, stealing will lead

us to poverty, but giving is a surefire way to achieve. Generosity would be stealing's greatest enemy.

5. Greed. Greed is the downfall of many a mighty man. Or tree in the forest. We as people tend to not stop at having enough, we "want the world Chico, and everything in it," as Scarface clearly points out. We seek to destroy after we have ravaged. Somehow making our greed justifiable. Our appetites are quite ravenous indeed. We seek and we plunder and then ask where it all went.

The best example of this is the Dr. Seuss book and subsequent movie, *The Lorax*. The Onceler goes and finds the Truffula tree and starts chopping. He meets up with the Lorax who speaks for the trees. His family has considered him a loser and casts him off. The Onceler figures out that the truffula trees make a beautiful new product called a Thneed. It has many uses. It has many great implications. He starts chopping down every tree and his family moves to him and gives him recognition and respect and he is again met by the Lorax who warns him. He speaks to him of the harm that chopping down every single truffula tree will lead to. He informs the Onceler that, "unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, things aren't going to get better, no it is not." The Lorax hands the Onceler a seed and leaves him with one word, unless.

How far do we go, depends on where we feel enough is enough. We seek power, or fame, or women, or whiskey, or weed, or beer, or entertainment, or prestige, or nice things, or fancy restaurants, or comfort, or drugs, or redemption or whatever. At some point, we should know that we can't do this alone. Not without purpose, not without a boundary, not without help. The lines get blurry and the want becomes a need and the need becomes what chains us to the wall. The chains most usually are not even locked but we still are attached by our own mental state. Just like the elephant being tied to a very sturdy chair at a little size and a little plastic chair as a big elephant. We can breakaway from all that with considerable effort, help and willingness to overcome it.

I just want you to ask yourself is this enough? That should solve the greater portion of this subject of greed. I point out, that it also may be helpful for those struggling through something, to see ahead and place definite boundaries on what their success looks like and the stopping points.

6. No vision. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." This wisdom comes straight from the Bible. And even atheists could use this logic. It is important to get clear on what it is that we as people ought to be doing. It is good to look around and see what we can learn from others but better to look deep inside the mirror at our own self. "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom," according to Aristotle. "Fashion is

what you adopt when you do not know yourself,” says Quentin Crisp most eloquently. (Honestly I just Googled these quotes and I’m not real sure who this Quentin guy is but I love this quote.)

So, we must know ourselves. “To thine own self be true,” writes a very interesting Shakespeare for very interesting times. It still applies today. In *Renaissance Man* starring Danny DeVito, we see this group of soldiers who learn Shakespeare to overcome their military obstacles. Here is why; they have the capability but no one has ever shown them how it applies to their lives and their day to day world.

One can teach math and science and language to people all day long, but one must instruct them why it matters. How it applies and how to use it. If I hand a caveman a shovel and do not instruct on its most basic use, I have not helped. I have hindered. In the tragedy of schooling for the masses, we are taught to think like everyone else and be like everyone else and fit in. Well, I’m with Seth Godin who challenges that ignorant notion. “Good morning boys and girls,” He quips on this particular TED talk. Then proceeds to educate us why we respond to it in the way we do. Not because it is a formality but because we were programmed to do so from our school system. We were all born unique. We were all born to be unique. We all must put aside the notion that we have to fit in.

I recently read *Rascal* by Chris Brady who writes about this very same dilemma. Who is standing in line and being like everyone else, when they aren’t cut out for that. They were meant to lead and find greatness but first they must step out of line. They must walk away from this one size fits all mentality. They must find their own path. Those who do that and can do that, are the ones who achieve their true potential. They find the zone and try to live their lives in it.

Dan Miller, author of *48 Days to the work you love*, has spoken about this very dilemma. People go and seek jobs where they have not studied themselves. They just seek the next available paycheck. He contends that there is more than just a paycheck. He quotes Thoreau, who says, “most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with their song still in them.” Dan argues that we could settle for a job, or find what makes us truly come alive. Our calling. Not just a job. Not just somewhere to go whittle away our time but something so unique to us that it makes us come to live fully and engage all of us and LIVE a life true to ourselves. To complete the three legged stool of what we are good at (talent), what has a money making model and what (financial), and what we are excited about (passion).

For the longest time, I have floated in life. “A complete unknown with no direction home,” states the famous Bob Dylan song. I did that. I floated and drifted and had no real purpose or clear way to find my calling. Sadly, it has taken me more than 48 days to figure out who I am and to interrupt my negative thought patterns. I have had to

psychoanalyze myself as the messed up Freud would deduce or to rewire my brain as my brilliant stepfather declares. To take apart the engine of our mind and our thoughts and to fix the broken parts and replace them with working parts to make this thing run. Not only run, but run how it should. As I get clear on those things that I'm equipped for, it dawns on me that there is only one me. If I don't do the becoming work of being the most me I can be, it will be tough to live with that looking back. Also, conversely, I think if we do not step up and do it, someone will. Someone maybe less able to do so. That scares me. Scares me enough to want to find my calling and become alive.

In the movie *Hackers*, there is several people trying to accomplish a goal of revealing a wrongdoing. In the sequence towards the end, the characters all have their computers kicked offline and aren't able to accomplish their goal. There is one yet close enough that must go and finish their task. He does so and the rest sort of gets resolved. This is sometimes how I view life with a vision. If we are the one who is closest and every other has been temporarily taken out of the running, we should deem it our responsibility to take the reins and go!

So, to tie this up in a neat little bow with some pretty paper, we need to figure out the vision we have for our lives. We need to figure out what makes us tick, why we respond how we do and also how to change these things as need be. We must rewire. Or, we face defeat and poverty and loneliness and things we really don't want.

7. Fear. Fear can paralyze even the mightiest of men. It can cripple and maim and stop us just short of greatness. It can leave us in the trenches battling a thing or it can be our greatest ally. Seth Godin refers to fear as a "lizard brain." The part that kicks in and says, hey human, there is danger. We should respond with, yeah thanks for the update but I got this. It's going to be ok.

So, what are we afraid of? We are afraid of wasting our lives, running out of money, finding success, marriage, commitment, laughter, love, getting hurt, getting made fun of, embarrassment, discomfort, making people mad, causing tension, staying in poverty, bugs, guns, government, religion, God, being in front of people, performing, things different from us. We have all had fear in our lives. The question is, are we going to let it stop us or use it to force us forward?

Fear causes our hearts to pulse and surge with adrenaline pounding through our veins. Our pupils dilate and we get ready. Some are very comfortable in this zone. Some let these physiological or body's natural responses stop them from moving forward with the thing afraid of. Some just long to avoid this feeling their whole lives trying to live in peace. Peace, is found in the midst of the storm, not from its absence. If one seeks to

avoid any fear causing dilemma, then we have not found peace. True peace, is letting the storm float around you while remaining calm about it.

Butchering has been my livelihood for a great number of years. I remember at a certain point I couldn't bring myself to shoot the crazy, angry beef that would kick the gates, jump the stalls and threaten my survival. As I started getting more and more comfortable with my skills and my aim and the gun, I started using the body's adrenaline for my benefit. I started remaining calm enough to function and not panic. I started to be able to lead the animals into slaughter with so many less incidents. The funny thing about fear is that it only intensified the animal's fear which intensified mine. But, the calmer that I have learned to become during those times, the calmer and smoother the process has become. Animals pick up on intent. And if I can handle my adrenaline spike, the butchering of the animal is a much mellower and drama free process. I have since started applying this same strategy to being on stage and negotiating with others. I have stood toe to toe in the midst of a would be brawl and remained calm enough to handle the situation effectively. Or at least without having to go to blows with someone over something trivial.

So, what do you do when you become afraid? Do you use that fear and lean into its potential or do you run from it? I hope you choose to do those things which frighten you on a daily basis. It's a muscle that needs practiced. If one doesn't use it, they lose it. Best of luck and calm and peace in the storm not without one.

8. Debt. This one is huge. How can one move forward if they are so worried about their day to day bills that they cannot think about getting out of the situation. They are caught in a very negative cycle indeed, as most of us have been. The want for a new car before being able to afford one. The want for a big house without being ready. The pool, the MTV crib life, the parties, the education, the travels, the vacations, the steak, the gas to waste, the fancy clothes, designer jewels, the handcrafted, the unique, the exquisite. All these things push us to reach into our skinny wallets and pull out that evil thing called Plastic. A credit card, a card shark, a means to get it now and pay later.

Such folly results. We see it, we want it, we put it on charge and spend 28 years paying 19 percent interest and getting nothing out of the object when we want to resell it. We fund our privileged education with it. I've seen some people pay for fast food with a credit card. Some buy toilet paper with it.

I have a better idea. Only buy what you can pay cash for. If you can't, well then maybe you shouldn't have the thing right now. I'm not saying ever, but not until you are ready to make it yours without payments or interest or without signing up for it. Banks sell this stuff. Why? Due to the fact that they make money off of it. Motor companies sell us shiny new vehicles on loan or lease but are hesitant to sell to someone with cold,

hard cash on hand. Why? Obviously they do not make as much money from this transaction as if they had wrapped you around their lease agreement. They want you to pay interest for seven years and make a twenty dollar a year contribution towards the principle. Now, I respect both of these industries for what they are. Also, it is possible to have and create a win-win situation for all involved. I will keep my money in the bank when possible, they make a little commission off of it once in a while. I'll run through my checks and they can charge me to print more of them. I could rent one of their security boxes and they could add a nominal fee to my account. I should buy a car and a salesman should get their commission and that's that. I shouldn't have to stuff everybody's account while I suffer making minimal monthly payments.

Student loans are evil. I hate them, I hate them, I hate them and so on. Fifteen years ago, I went to school under the impression, I would go and finish and be alright to repay them quickly after school. Like all things, I couldn't peek into the future far enough to see that my parents would start to get a divorce and my dad would pass away and that I would be out of work. I couldn't predict those things. I should have looked far enough ahead to plan differently but I bought the lie. The one that says, go to college and get a good job and some company will take care of you the rest of your life. That one caused me to be paying a minimum payment towards my student loan while continuing to struggle through the season of poverty. If I could do it again, I would have just avoided college until I knew myself and what I wanted to accomplish.

I have seen some people succeed somehow with high dollar student loans and car payments and high risk mortgages and gambling. However, it is a much safer risk to do without such things. It gives one breathing room.

If you would like information on handling debt a bit better than before reading this, please be encouraged to go read and study and understand money. "Keep my mind on my money and my money on my mind," as the infamous Snoop D. O. Double G. sings about. School doesn't exactly teach responsibility towards money. It teaches that it is good for the economy to spend money. Which is what we've done. What is obscured is the fact that it is better to have it to spend than to borrow it. There are some key players on the financial scene but a few people I like are; Dave Ramsey with his *Total Money Makeover* book, *The Automatic Millionaire* by David Bach, and of course, what the Bible itself has to say on the subject. I am not going to take sides because I think it has to do with personal preference. Even Suze Orman has written on the topic. But, for the sake of argument, I have never read her stuff or listened to her teachings.

All I really can say for certain is that if you want to remain in poverty or struggling financially, please, don't read up on the subject of money. Don't study about it or learn about it or try to find out what the really rich do with theirs (*The Millionaire Mind* by Thomas J. Stanley).

9. Ignorance. Ah. There it is. One of the greatest means to an unfulfilled life not lived. Barely spoken about is the ones who remain fully unaware that there is a big connected world right outside of their own.

I had to chuckle over the holidays because people were all gathered together yet everyone was having to tweet to each other or show the funniest facebook videos. This is a new world people. There is a big world that gets smaller all the time. This world is outside of our doors and windows and comfort zones. It pales in comparison to nothing. It is better than any HD screen or dazzling pixelated display. First, though, one must seize learning to climb out of the tunnel of struggle to see the light. There is no other alternative.

Awhile back, we watched *The Croods* as a family and have to admit, it is an excellent movie. We enjoyed it thoroughly. The great takeaways are all there, the lessons, the whys, the hows and a typical smattering of people unwilling to go outside of what they know to find the coolest stuff ever. I peek at farmhouses while driving past and wonder if they are the Crood type people or those people with a larger worldview full of knowledge and wisdom and open mindedness to see and seek truth.

The Crood father was a man who basically shut himself off from learning about anything at anytime about any particular subject. He would not venture out into the darkness, was afraid of fire and was quite certain that everything was a direct threat to himself and family. I see people like that right now and shake my head. I'm not knocking them, just simply wanting to figure out ways to make learning fun. I drift back in memory to the times when I learned some new song on guitar or some new interesting and useful thing and the feeling I had when it happened. I love that feeling. That accomplishment feeling. There is a certain spike in the brain about it all. I have always chased that spike and continue to do so as I hope to always pursue this feeling.

In this great big web filled world, we all have no longer any reason to know very little about our surroundings and places we've never been. We all have access. Most people have at least attempted to use the internet and computers are becoming the driving force in most places. Survival on a day to day basis has been taken care of for the greater part of the world. Therein leaving time for academic pursuits and knowledge gathering. It has been said we can get more news in a day than previous generations used to get in their lifetimes. We can get this stuff mainlined into our blood streams as well. Such an awesome new age. There is books, podcasts, mp3 players and no fear of the critical parts skipping. There is art and music and connection to videos and ethnic cultures that we've never been exposed to that lay right near the click of a finger. Exciting, isn't it?

Go, and shut out the world if you must, but that path leads only to poverty, to want, to struggle and to an eventual dying. I want more, don't you?

10. Government. As my parents used to be on government assistance and I watched their struggle firsthand, I should have known better than to trust it for my own family's well being. I'm not knocking the government assistance programs which have been so generous to my family and I through struggles. I'm simply stating that it does feel like a chain of shame around a person's neck. It is a pride thing I guess. It makes one feel bad that they are unable in a season to provide for their own family. I contend that I would be able to do so if we, as humans, still had the right without money to go and fish and hunt and grow our own vegetables and fruit. Now it is a chase for the dollar and not a chase for the value it might bring. One shouldn't have to be well off to have use of the world's natural resources.

At a certain point, people start to lose that "take care of it" themselves mindset. They start to lose their independence and it is replaced by a crippling dependence. I'm not trashing on those who need the help. I'm trashing on those who make it their career. Time for America and the world to start becoming independent and then eventually interdependent again. To see the fruits of one's labor and achieve the dreams that one starts out with. Before the world kicks your teeth in or the best becomes unreachable to a normal run of the mill type person. There is some serious flaws in our government assistance programs. They also do some great good and fulfill a need that would otherwise be fulfilled if people had the right view of money and time and diligence and lived. The thing that gets me most is how people want to trash on others for their run of bad luck and say it was wrong to take help or handouts. If the "Christians" would be practicing the Bible's wisdom concerning debt and tithe, there would be little to no government involvement. It would be taken care of according to the people of faith and its organizations.

If it was up to me, I would get those people at the workforce centers to do a better job of hooking the right people up with the right jobs instead of trying to meet some numbers quota. I have had to search their databases and talk with their staff and grovel to get nowhere. That staff should be convincing people and training people to figure out who they were created to be and what they were created to do. This is huge. Crazy but good could come of it. I would also continue the food stamp program and the WIC program and the assistance provided by community action programs. Oddly enough, the community action programs are only a little bit publicly funded. The other major percentage is from private donations. I think WIC checks should be less incriminating and conspicuous. It is terrible when someone is judged because of their situation. I see people in line ahead of me paying with their food stamp card or WIC and people between us are looking down their nose and judging, making rude comments and just basically being jerks. I have been there and struggling to get out myself. It is the worst feeling to know that others are making up an opinion of you and your family based on

little to no information. They get a snapshot, when the movie is so much more behind the scenes. A poster view where a story exists. Furthermore, people pay into it. They pay social security and Medicaid and taxes, like all others in America. No difference there. I have seen too many denied disability benefits or social security while others have much money in the bank and hide it all to cheat and get their social security.

My solution; end social security and give people more money and the knowledge to handle their money. Continue out the program for the baby booms and those on it now, but end it otherwise. Teach people once again to acknowledge their own part in their own destiny. Sway public opinion to those who are less fortunate and teach people compassion on their fellow man. Teach people to think of others and to show others how to make it. Not to laugh at those without the latest gadget or nicest car. We have lost our way because things are based on newness right now.

Forget about the people who are working two or three jobs and still can't make ends meet. Forget about the ones who don't qualify for assistance because their paper money looks a lot different than their real money. Forget about those in a marriage who have one spouse paying their total check for child support or garnishment and child support isn't taken into consideration. Forget those who have a disabled spouse or relative or dependent adult at their home. Doing these things in this paragraph is what keeps the flaws around. Life is hard enough without worrying about the basics. Depending on the government for a long term run is never in the interest of man's own independence. So, I implore you to set a date that you want to be done receiving assistance and strive towards it. It will not be easy. It will be downright challenging, but, I think, so very worthwhile.

11. Negative attitude. Ah yes. Another touching story of I couldn't get what I wanted and people hate me and boo flipping hoo! Change your attitude and then change your life. I'm sure we have all seen the people at a workplace that just suck the life out of every encounter, person and group within their earshot. They rain on every parade. They naysay at every turn. They tear down more dreams than dreams can dream. They rip peoples hearts out and bounce on them. We all know the type. The question is; are you a person who others consider that way or not? If you can't answer that one honestly, I suggest you go see the earlier points I made.

We had a meat cutter at one of my jobs that was a total negative nancy. This person would run down every idea, chase off every customer, make worklife a severe difficulty and so much more. The vibe of the place was one of tension and darkness. This person would one up every story the other workers would tell. They wouldn't let one finish their complete thought before completing it for them. They would not help out with extra work or anything they felt was out of their role. Basic run of the mill American loser. The one people want to avoid at many costs but the ones who seem to wander luckily into a management type role. The complete d bags. Wasn't long before my sole

goal became getting rid of them. Oddly enough, I did happen to say the one thing that apparently sent him flying off the handle and out of employment. I simply stated that “customers should be able to park next to the door and not employees.” Had I known that is all I would have needed to say, I would have said it sooner. I would have said it the first day I got there. Needless to say, it just so happened to be the busiest time of the year when this went down. Oh well, thought I. Still accomplished what I set out to do with nonviolence.

Want to remain struggling? All you have to do is keep being a negative attitude person and it will be yours for the taking. But, if you want something different, a change might be in your future. How about a change over to a positive attitude? Yeah, that is a major win in life. See, a smile and good thoughts make a person beautiful again.

12. Gossip. Yes, the mother of mothers and the hen that destroys any henhouse, cathouse or place of employment. Not just women either. This one will take a high level executive and turn them into yesterdays milk. It is bad in a hurry.

Another locker I worked at for years always had a huge struggle with this one thing. Had they been trying to change this, their business would have prospered. Instead they settled for mediocrity. “Good is the enemy of great,” writes Jim Collins in the book *Good to Great*. Every person that would wander in and purchase something would be talked about. The who they were, the who they slept with and the flaws they had made. I just wanted to talk about great art and music and how to love one another. Then the customer would smile and wave and say hi to everyone and people would just act like they were best friends. Never to mention that a mere second ago, these guys were gossiping. Wow. Yeah, I know, it was a very awkward situation to be in. I didn’t expect more than that though from an alcoholic boss, a greedy former owner and a Crood. Everyone else, may have just been trying to keep their head down and work. The nagging was too much, the gossip was too much, I had to leave that toxic environment. I can say, however, that if that is what you want, stick around and live it. I want more though.

If you want to stay struggling, keep on this path. If you want prosperity instead and peace and blessings and health and life, try to speak life. Try to imagine it as if every person were there with you. If you wouldn’t say it to the person, you probably ought not to say it. Some places have been known to fire a person for this offense. I agree with them.

13. Tongue. This one thing weighs so little but even mighty men can barely control it. We speak and our subconscious acts it out. We say we are sick or broke or in poverty or never going to have enough or not going to be happy and, poof, it happens. Try to be cautious here people. There is several great books on this very topic. I recommend

Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill and *The Tongue: a powerful force* by Charles Capps. The Audio of the latter book is interesting with southern drawl and whatnot. I'm not going to say more about this one.