



Want Less, Get More

Greed's had a lot of bad press lately. But is wanting more sex, more money and more wins at work and play really so bad? Not if you go about it the right way, say the experts. And funnily enough, that way could just be a matter of dialling down your desire

BY DANIEL WILLIAMS

Your parents probably told you that if you wanted something badly enough, you'd eventually get it. What they probably didn't say was that an overload of desire can also trip you up.

Unchecked yearning can make you reckless with your dough. It can turn you into a tongue-tied dope around women, or a bore who harangues their partner for sex. It can make you tighten up on the sporting field when it's best that you're looser than a clown's pocket. It may even transform you into a gold-plated jerk your colleagues fantasise about drowning in the water cooler. In short, it can screw up your life.

If you're going to make greed work for you, if you're going to use it to obtain your heart's desire, then you need to control it, not let it control you. Here's how.

WOMEN

When you're chatting to a girl you like but don't exactly fantasise about, you're a pretty smooth customer, right? You're relaxed, so she is, too, and the conversation flows.

But what about the girl you're crazy for? What if you've seen her a couple of times now and can't get her out of your mind? That's when, in the charm stakes, you can sometimes make Mr Bean seem like a lady-killer.

Blockes who badly want a girl to like them tend to make one of three mistakes, says Jo Lamble, a clinical psychologist specialising in relationships. You may start rattling off your credentials – boasting, in effect, about your job or material wealth; or you try too hard to be clever with one-liners that fall flat; or – worst-case scenario – you all but lose the power of speech.

The problem here is that your desire for this girl is causing anxiety that's preventing you from showing yourself at your best.

The solution Remind yourself of all the good things you'll still have in your life, even if this girl never



reciprocates your feelings. And okay, she's gorgeous. But she's also flesh and blood, with her share of flaws sure to emerge if you get to know her better.

Once you're composed, your mind will settle where it should be – in the here and now and focused on her. "Take it from me," says Lamble, "if a woman comes away from a first meeting and you've been interested in her and made good eye contact, and then next time you see her you remember what she said . . . that's all you really need to do."

WORK

Maybe it's a promotion you covet, or a raise, or a bigger office. Whatever it is, tempering your eagerness to get ahead could be vital to your chances of success.



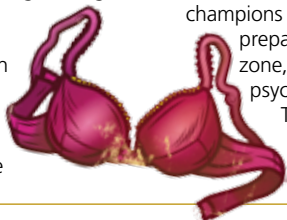
Excessive ambition in the workplace has a way of throwing you off course. It gets you mired in office politics and you can find yourself adopting the sorts of tactics – white-anting, brown-nosing, backstabbing – that you'd always regarded with contempt.

"Research shows that people who engage in a lot of that sort of behaviour are very negatively evaluated by their co-workers," says Dr Ben Searle, an organisational psychologist and senior lecturer in human sciences at Sydney's Macquarie University. "It comes back to bite you in the end."

The solution Let advancement take care of itself by attending to the basics, advises Searle – so roll up your sleeves, fulfill your key performance indicators and, above all, show initiative. While some attention to relationship building and spotlighting your workplace accomplishments is both legit and advisable, ultimately, says Searle, "it's results that will impress your boss and get you moving through the ranks".

SEX

Chronic desperation doesn't sit well on a man, says *MH* sex coach Jacqueline Hellyer. In fact, she says, "it's kind of revolting". Think of sexual desire like food cravings, suggests Hellyer. What would be more tempting: the sight of a mouth-watering chocolate cake adorning your kitchen bench, or having someone repeatedly shove that same cake under your nose



while demanding you eat it? Option two, says Hellyer, encapsulates a lot of guys' clumsy approach to seduction.

The solution If you want your partner to match your sexual needs, here's the cornerstone of your new strategy: stop craving sex! Or, more precisely, stop making that craving so obvious.

Hellyer says she's forever advising male clients to back off in the bedroom to allow their partner's sexual interest to regenerate. But it can be a hard message to sell.

You may think you'll get even less sex than you're having now if you're not at her all the time – pressing, cajoling, insisting – but you won't. In fact, give your girl breathing space, while remaining thoughtful and engaged, and you'll be stunned by the results, reckons Hellyer.

There's a reason Mills & Boon bodice-rippers run off the shelves – and it's not the quality of the writing. "Those books are tapping into the essence of female sexuality," says Hellyer. "They all feature a guy who's a real man. He's not needy and he's not pathetic and he's not wanting stuff all the time, so she can just swoon and fall into his arms."

SPORT

What sports psychologists call "over-arousal" is a state that kills your chances of performing at your best. When you're over-aroused, you're too amped – too intent on beating your opponent, impressing people, avoiding failure or doing something besides having fun and letting your talent flow.

Why do you think you play better tennis in the warm-up than in the match? Because in the warm-up, you're not worried about results. Nothing's at stake, so you're not suffocating your ability under a blanket of expectations. Not convinced? Consider this: how many times have you totalled your racquet during the hit-up?

Increased muscle tension, elevated heart rate, shallow breathing, frowning and negative self-talk are all signs you're trying too hard.

The solution "Learn from the champions and use your pre-match preparation to get in the zone," says sports performance psychologist Jeff Bond.

That means taking your focus off what Bond calls "extrinsic motivators"



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– such as winning – and switching to "intrinsic" ones, like the joy of playing. "Say to yourself, 'I want to play this sport because I love the feel of it,'" advises Bond.

Once play starts, use techniques to distract your analytical mind so your instincts and muscle memory can take over. This could mean focusing on the sound or feel of a well-timed stroke, rather than the consequences of losing the next point.

MONEY

At every seedy bar, soup kitchen and Centrelink office is a guy who wanted to make his fortune so badly – and so quickly – that he finished up with the arse out of his pants.

In many ways, the worst thing that can happen to a novice investor is an early windfall through speculative trading, says Andrew Page, a senior analyst at the Hubb Financial Group. You make a killing – a thousand bucks becomes \$10,000 in an hour – "And if that run of luck continues for a bit, it's very easy to form the opinion you're a wizard of Wall Street," says Page.

But that kind of return comes only with high-risk investment. "You can take a very cavalier approach to risk and there's a small chance you'll do very, very well and a much greater chance that you won't," warns Page. **The solution** Don't allow your desire to grow your wealth to become contaminated by impatience. Aim for steady accumulation, advises Page.

The average annual return on the Australian stock market over the past 30 years has been about 10 per cent. While that's better than any rate you'd get in a term deposit or bank account, you may figure it's still not going to deliver the kind of cabbage you're after.

Keep in mind compounding returns, says Page. You'll make 10 per cent annually not only on your initial investment, but on what you've already made from it.

There are also dozens of blue-chip stocks that have achieved an average annual return of more than 15 per cent since 2000. "No, you're not going to make a million dollars by the end of next week, but you're likely to make some really good money over the long term, with a really low risk that you're going to lose the lot," says Page. The result is you'll be a rich old bloke, not a bitter and broke one.

