

“It is easy to confuse a mind loaded by scarcity for one that is inherently less capable.”

Dr. Sendhil Mullainathan

The Mental Tax of Poverty

Scarcity - not having enough time, money, or resources - can wreak havoc on our brains. It distracts us, overwhelms us, forces us into trade-off decisions, and steals the ability to concentrate on things we need to do. Right now the uncertainty and chaos of COVID-19 is creating scarcity for most if not all educators: Forcing trade-offs between safety and educational norms, taking up our mental bandwidth, and causing significant stress.

Most of the time, scarcity is temporary. But for some, like students and families in poverty, there is rarely a break from the mental tax of scarcity. This course will help you better understand its effects on your own mind, and on the minds of students and families you serve - and find hopeful ways to adjust your strategies to see better results.

In this short online course that draws from the ground-breaking work of researchers Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, you will:

- 1** Understand the concept of scarcity and how it affects cognitive function and human behavior
- 2** Identify situations where we ourselves operate under scarcity
- 3** Explore how scarcity is a constant challenge for those in poverty.
- 4** Utilize principles and assessments for program design to better serve students who experience scarcity



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