

What is Money?



People's definitions of money are wide ranging. Some see money as power, some as social acceptance and some people see it as evil. I've heard money described as a store of value' by some and as security by others - although when I hear money described as security I always remember how vulnerable I felt carrying \$100,000 in small bills at a festival I managed.

Without a context, money is not real. If I say, "I have a thousand dollars!" without a context, it doesn't tell you anything. Whereas if I go on to say that I've been saving for two years for a plane ticket to Italy and I have finally got the \$1000, you might share in my great sense of joy and accomplishment. Conversely if I precede the statement, "I have a thousand dollars!" with the statement, "If I don't pay that loan shark \$5000 next Tuesday, he's going to break my legs," then we know that the statement of having a \$1000 is in fact one of despair. It took me almost two decades of working with small business and doing tax returns to realize that money is only meaningful in a context.

Adriane G. Berg states in *How to Stop Fighting about Money and Make Some*,

"The sad truth is that most American couples miss their chance at making big money because of emotional, not economic reasons. In fact, if there's one thing I've learned in my financial career it's this:

MONEY PROBLEMS HAVE VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH MONEY!"

(Her Caps!)

Life is best when you control your money rather than when it controls you. When you earn more than you spend, money doesn't rule your life anymore. By reviewing priorities and making new choices you can begin to take more control of your life. Saying, "I can't afford that" puts the power outside ourselves. Saying, "I choose not to buy that" is another matter entirely. It becomes a source of pride in our self-restraint instead of a source of shame. "The economy is the shared religion of our time and the economists are our priests." According to Vicki Robin, our strongest cultural messages tell us 'More is better' and 'Growth is good.' She spoke of this growth as a cancerous thing consuming us as well as the resources of our world. Popular myth would have us believe that it is our duty to serve the economy when the reverse is true - it should be serving all of us. If we could be more intelligent about money, it would have an ecological impact on the planet.

Money is a pretty inadequate tool to measure abundance. Suze Orman, in her *9 Steps to Financial Freedom*, says

"Abundance is - in crucial ways - a state of mind."

Money seems to be used as a yardstick for everything these days. It doesn't account for so much of what we value - like beauty, refreshment of the spirit, happiness. Yesterday a client told me that money can buy happiness. I thought about all the unhappy people earning more than \$250,000 who have passed through my office, while the happiest person I've ever met made less than \$10,000. On the other hand, scarcity can produce unhappiness in great wide handfuls.

Pessimists call themselves realists but in fact things can always go either way. There is no more reality in predicting constant failure than there is in predicting constant success. According to Richard Carlson, author of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff about Money*,

"It should come as no surprise to you that pessimists experience far more disappointments than optimists. The reason is simple: they are looking for failure. They want verification that they are correct in their negative assumptions. One of the most basic laws of success is that your energy follows your attention.

We create what we see and what we expect to see."

Consider the wisdom of simplicity and clarity. Strong self esteem comes from clarity of thought and purpose. It also relies on persistent truth telling. The stronger your self esteem, the better your management of money will be. The better your money management, the stronger your self esteem will grow. My favourite definition of money comes from *Your Money or Your Life* by Joe Dominguez & Vicki Robin.

"Money is something we chose to trade our life energy for. - Life energy is all we have. It is precious because it is limited and irretrievable and because our choices about how we use it express the meaning and purpose of our time here on earth."

Let Loose Change help you discover what money means to you.