

Let's Not Talk About Money

Syble Solomon | November 27, 2006

Let's talk about messages from home. One day when I was eight years old, my mom sent me to the corner grocery store to buy a few things. On the way home I managed to lose \$10. We retraced my steps but the money was nowhere to be found. My mother just sat down and wept. It was the first time I had seen her cry. That was all the money we had until her next payday and this was a disaster. I clearly got the message that money was very important and powerful since it could upset my mother like that. I also learned that money was something to be treated with great care and respect, definitely not something to let slip through your fingers. The experience created clear money messages that would be reinforced as I grew up.

I got a very different message that related to payday. My dad worked the night shift at a factory and got paid every Thursday. Each payday was a celebration; he would stop on his way home and buy a sack of White Castle hamburgers. It was thrilling to be allowed to break the normal rules and get up in the middle of the night to share this wonderful "feast" with our parents. I always associated getting paid with feeling special and having permission to do things that would be unthinkable at any other time. I also got the message that even when there wasn't much money, spending a little to create a happy memory with your family is a good thing.

What were some of your early money messages?

Andrea says one of her messages was that talking about money was scary — very scary. Whenever money was mentioned in her family she knew her parents would inevitably start fighting. Her father would accuse her mother of spending too much and her mother would retaliate by yelling that he should earn more. Andrea hid in her room with the pillow over her head and never wanted to hear anyone talk about money again — ever.

Rod learned that people with money had power. When his dad would miss his baseball games he would tell Rod he was afraid he would lose his job if he didn't stay when his boss wanted him to do extra work. This message was reinforced when his mom would warn him and his sisters to be extra nice to Granny and Pops or they might not help them out when they needed extra money.

Donna grew up hearing that money, or rather the lack of it, was to blame for everything.

She couldn't have a birthday party because there wasn't any money. Aunt Maddy couldn't leave her abusive husband and start a new life because she didn't have any money. Donna heard the message so often in so many ways she didn't realize there was more than one way to overcome obstacles.

Glen always saved his money but his mother would routinely "borrow" some. After a while, it didn't seem that saving paid off so he got in the habit of spending his money as soon as he got it. On the other hand, Cherelle saved to pay for a class trip that was a wonderful experience. Her positive consequences resulted in the message that planning and saving was worth it so it became a habit for her.

Lastly, Frank remembered the time when he realized that it's worth sacrificing to reach a goal. Having his own room was his dream, so when his parents said they were saving to buy a bigger house, he decided he would do anything he could to help them. He didn't ask his parents for any extras that year and gave up a lot of things. He did get his own room when they moved and felt his sacrifices helped make it happen.

What money messages did you get from home? Let's talk about it on the Military.com's discussion board.



About Syble Solomon

Syble Solomon is an eclectic, innovative professional speaker and author. After 30 years of being the trailing spouse who had to adapt to frequent relocations, she has combined her previous experience in education, business and gerontology to promote personal responsibility for creating a satisfying and secure life. As an executive coach for the past ten years, she has worked with leaders in the military, Fortune 500 corporations, and private and public organizations. She is the creator of Money Habitudes? the deck of cards that helps people identify how their hidden habits and attitudes about money can support and sabotage their life and financial goals. Visit www.moneyhabitudes.com for more information.

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