

Money Magic

by Briana Cavanaugh

In our community we talk about money magic a lot. What we don't talk about is what money is and what we do with it. We get specific about sex, gender, gardening, permaculture, activism, and action. But we don't talk about money. If we're going to truly create change, we need to look at this.

Money started out as people trading things (goods) or activities (services) with other people in their communities. Later someone got the idea of being able to trade a thing for a token so that you didn't have to carry half a cow with you in order to get a place to sleep away from home. Convenient!

As far as I can tell, money is the idea, or the spirit, of community exchange. Money is inherently about people — we created it. Unlike trees or animals or oceans, this thing is of our doing. Money does not exist in nature outside of us. Most other creatures use themselves and their environment directly to get what they need.

The upside is that money is one place where as human beings we are totally and completely at cause — completely able to create and destroy this thing at will. At whose will? The will of the people in the community.

The downside is that we put a thing between us and what we desire. And then we gave it energy. That thing has taken on a life of its own — a life that

we give it. Money is a social contract. An agreement. We agree that if we take paper, metal, or plastic to a place we can exchange it for a thing. We sometimes give our money to other people to hold on to for long periods of time and they give us back more than we gave them — well, sometimes.

We give money life. We give it our hopes and dreams. We say things like, "If only I had money, I'd..." or "I need money so that I can..." We give it our ideas about the future: "Maybe I can

save up and..." We blame our worst fears and nightmares on it in the form of housing foreclosures, investments tanking, over-spending, and not having enough. We use money to take out our aggressions: "I hate paying taxes," and "The government totally rips us off!" or to play out our emotional insecurities — retail therapy anyone?

We make money into the Boogie Man. No one talks about it or looks

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directly at it. We don't teach the subject in school. In fact, we don't teach kids about it at all except through second hand ideas, or watching adults. We don't really teach adults about it either except in specialized classes, like accounting or "money management."

Consider our stories and fairy tales. What story do you tell that talks about dollars and cents? How about the Three Little Pigs, where having more resources equates to not being eaten by the wolf. Or the stories where we send our young (usually) men out on a quest and give them our young (usually) women when they return. This makes the young women the currency of the kingdom.

When was the last time you talked directly about money with someone? For many people it's never, or only with a spouse and often only in a crisis. We as a community don't talk about money or teach about money. We wish and hope and we do magic, but fail to act directly. Let's talk in direct terms. What can we do to manifest our truth and our desires? I've put together a list of the ten things that I think are most important to getting straight with ourselves about money.

First and foremost, tell the truth.

What is the truth about your money? How much do you have? How much do you spend? Where do you spend it and when do you spend it? Where do you get money from? Knowing your truth and speaking it is the first step on the path.

Acknowledge choice. A common way we give away choice is asking others for permission to do things that are about you. Our fears of looking ridiculous or being different keep us from telling the truth and acting in alignment with that truth. Even, and sometimes especially, in communities

that are not mainstream. If these people don't love us, who will? You will. It is your job to love you.

Be accountable for your actions.

Don't over-commit; show up for your commitments or get help to meet them. When you're not accountable, you're eroding your truth and your integrity. It doesn't matter if no one notices — you know. You have to live with yourself no matter what, so make it count.

Know that you are always doing the best you can. This is what we do all day long — we make our best possible choices. This is instinctual programming and all animals do it. But we seem to add an additional piece. We look back at our choices and berate ourselves for the choices that led here, even though in the moment we made the best possible choice with the available information. All we can ever do is make the best choice we can in the moment. So stop knocking yourself around for things that you can't change.

Shore up those energy leaks.

Otherwise you are diverting energy from

action, self-care, and what you really want. If every act is a magical act, then your worrying is just as powerful as your ritual. What do you suppose the outcome will be if you spend ten times as much energy worrying as acting or doing magic?

Take action. Don't just be at choice, be at cause. I watch people work at jobs they hate in order to get money, spend three hours a few times a year doing money magic — and then wonder why they're miserable. What would your world look like if you used your life's energy to do what you love?

Trust wisely — and then act.

Otherwise known as, follow your intuition. I don't trust that I can walk into a store and spend \$5 for all the groceries that I need for my family for the week. But I do trust that I am taken care of and that my son and I will have all we truly need. I pray to have what I need, I get information, do the best I can, trust wisely, act, and then do my best not worry about it.

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Love. Try an experiment. Act from love, then act from fear. You tell me where you want to be. The bonus of acting from love is a change in brain chemistry. When we experience kindness we get a shot of serotonin which regulates mood. It's nature's happy pill. And it's not just the person receiving the kindness that gets the good drugs. The person acting and anyone watching is also chemically affected by the kindness. Nature has wired us to be love. I say we take advantage of it!

Examine your assumptions; explore your choices. Do you assume that you must have money to have a thing or experience? If you want a thing, can you barter, trade, or work for it? Does someone else have it and are they willing to share? Can you go together and reduce the cost? What is it you're really looking for? What do you assume has to happen? Are there other ways to do that?

Practice integrity and self-care — the biggest piece of this puzzle. Of all the things that you can do to create change about your financial situation, taking care of yourself is the most critical thing you can do. That's what this list is about. When you use money, what you are exchanging with people is your life's energy. Remember: we exchange energy or work for money, and money for goods and services. It all comes from you and your energy — all of it.

Self-care creates money in a very clear, tangible way. Good boundaries create abundance. Integrity creates prosperity.

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Sufficiency vs Abundance

by Briana Cavanaugh

People talk about abundance, but it's generally portrayed as excess, as "extremely wealthy." "Abundance" is primarily a way to re-package rampant consumerism.

"Sufficiency" is the idea that there is enough. That you are enough and have enough and all is well.

Yet there aren't endless resources. If we put sustainability next to abundance and prosperity, I see the solution in sufficiency.

If some use a lot of resources, others have none. Resources are finite. If some people pollute, others are sick. If some people sell local resources, local people go hungry.

And there is enough for everyone. Abundance is not an exact formula. It's not clear that everyone should have two cars and a house and a yacht. It is about making good choices and promoting *everyone* being well and healthy. That's the abundance I seek.

When I went into business for myself I had to decide what my game was, what choices to make. What do I want to win? What choices do I want to make?

I want to win at spending time with my kid and living well so I can work on healing myself and the world. That means working enough hours that we can eat and have a safe place to sleep and enough resources that we can learn and grow and be happy.

My game is not "let's make a million dollars." Not because money isn't fun, but because money and resources are not an end in and of themselves. When we make money an end we risk ourselves, our planet, and our connection with the earth. We put greed ahead of people and the planet.

My goals are about spending money wisely and enjoying the time that I have to raise an awesome, empowered, happy kid while experiencing deep joy and lots of love. Not so bad really.

