



the secret life of
money
A KID'S GUIDE TO CASH

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“Money frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy.”

– GROUCHO MARX



HELLO, CASH-O-RAMA

What’s this book all about?
Oh, yeah. Money. That stuff.

CHEDDAR. BUCKS. MOOLAH. FUNDS. BREAD. BACON. BEANS.

Whatever you want to call your money, there’s a good chance you’re starting to take it a bit more seriously these days. Maybe you’re thinking about taking a babysitting class or mowing the neighbor’s lawn to turn your spare time into pure moneymaking magic. Sounds like a plan.

Or perhaps you’ve already got a wad of cash stuffed in your old piggy bank...and now your mom is telling you it’s time to open a real bank account.

And that's where the problems start. Because as soon as a bank gets involved, money can become kind of...confusing.

You start to hear stories about interest and debt, credit cards and loans. Then there's all that weird stuff in the paper about stocks, bonds, taxes, and bull markets. (You're pretty sure that last one isn't about cows at the grocery stores, but still...) And what the heck is a mortgage?

I mean, c'mon. Do you really need to worry about this stuff now?

You're not alone in feeling weird about it. Talking about money can make people really uncomfortable. If you don't know what words like "stocks" and "debt" mean, they quickly seem like a big jumbled mess of terms. Plus, money has the power to make us worry because lots of us never seem to have enough of it. We think that if we have more, life will be better. The result? People will try all sorts of things to get their hands on more money.

Sometimes it works for them. But sometimes it doesn't.



Winners don't always win

Take lotteries. You'd think that if you won a big chunk of change—to the tune of \$30 million—your life would be set, right? Your family could buy a spiffy new car, a mansion with a pool, and even pony up for a pony. That's what a lot of people assume. More money = better life.



But that's not always how the story ends. It turns out a lot of lottery winners end up losing all their winnings, and even declare bankruptcy when the cash runs out. Some winners blow *all* their money on boats, cars, vacations, houses, and parties, while others give too much of their winnings away to friends and family and don't keep enough for themselves. Others forget they have to pay taxes on their loot, and before they know it, the taxman shows up and takes any leftover cash. Oops.

Lottery winners' good luck can quickly go bad in another way: Winners get lonely. Imagine your family just struck it big and suddenly you have more money than anyone else you know. At first it feels like a dream come true. But hold on! How many kids in your class will be jealous of you? How many will stop being your friend? How many other kids who barely said hello to you before the win now want to be your best friend? Whom do you trust?

Money. You mean the world to us.

Lotteries are a super example of how much power money has over us. That's because **money is never just money**. In other words, cash has a serious impact—both good and bad—on, well, everything.

Money is more than a piece of paper or a coin stuffed into the pocket of your backpack. Think about it—your money decides whether you live in a swanky mansion or a tin-roof shack. It gives you the means to store fresh apples in your fridge, bread on the counter, and soup in the pantry...or merely a bag of rice in the corner of the room. Money influences what bike you ride, whether you go to camp, and even how you feel about yourself. Your parents possibly even talked about whether they had enough money to start a family (read: you)!

Money brings up big, big questions that are really interesting to answer.

Questions like: "Anyone want to make me a millionaire?"

Lottery winner. No free lunch.

Guess what? My friend Deb's family won a cool \$3 million playing the lottery. I asked her what she hated most about having the cash. "Nobody buys me lunch anymore. A lot of my friends expect me to pay for everyone's meal!"

Gulp.





Wanted: A million dollars

In November 2010, a comedian in New York City named Craig Rowin created a video for YouTube that asked somebody—anybody—to give him \$1 million. He didn't really want it for any cause, and it's not like he did something specific to deserve it. But wouldn't it be cool if a millionaire or billionaire stepped up and offered to give him the dough? That's what he thought, too.

It was a kooky enough idea to draw in nearly half a million viewers. Even more tuned in for his follow-up video.

Today, Craig insists it was all just a joke, but when he realized the million bucks wasn't coming, he decided to take the gag one step further. He made a fake voicemail message from a mystery "millionaire" named Benjamin, who claimed he wanted to make Craig super wealthy. Then Craig printed off a fake notarized letter so the deal would look more legit.

That's when the whole situation started to travel to crazyville. A reporter for a New York newspaper got into Craig's apartment building

and started asking him questions. Was the story real? Was it fake? Was he really going to get a million bucks from a stranger? Then other television and radio stations in the U.S. and Canada started calling wanting to know the same thing. Craig was in a bind.

"I didn't want to ruin the joke and say, 'You're right. You're an investigative reporter. Please ruin this for everybody,'" he says now.

Finally unable to take the pressure anymore, he decided to come clean sooner than planned. He hosted the fake-check hand-off at a local theater and stood up in front of a 170-person sold-out crowd.

"Sometimes you ask for a million dollars and get it, and sometimes you ask for a million dollars and don't," he said that night...before setting the check on fire and revealing the hoax.

A few months later, he says he's still unsure what he learned from the whole experience. He does know, however, that people either loved him or hated him for asking for the million. Because people think of money as having value, it makes us uncomfortable if it's devalued by giving it away for nothing. Especially a sum that big. A million dollars is supposed to mean something, right?

Even Craig admits he would have felt incredibly uneasy if a big shot had actually turned up and given him the money.

"I believe in the goodness of people, but if someone is willing to give you a million dollars for nothing, there's absolutely something wrong with that person," he says.

Money for nothing?

As Craig learned pretty quickly, no one is going to walk up and give us a wad of cash just because we ask for it. No way! If you want money, you usually have to figure out a way to earn it. You sell your prized lizard tank for \$50 or spend a day baking bread in a bakery in exchange for a little, well, dough. That's how money exchanges hands in the real world.

Besides, asking for a handout can feel a bit unsettling if you don't know where the money comes from. Craig says now he would have handed back the check if someone gave him a real one for \$1 million. Who knows what strings would have been attached to the gift? Would he eventually have had to give it back? Would the money have turned into a disaster, just as it has for so many unlucky lottery winners?

Getting comfy with cash

OK, let's recap...

Winning the lottery? Bad. Asking for free money? Big mistake.

Soooo...what is the secret to making money, then? Knowledge. Straight up, the more you learn about cash, the less nervous you feel about it. I've got proof, too.

When I was a kid, there was a big recession and lots of people lost their jobs, including my dad. My parents didn't always have enough cash even to buy me a birthday present. At one point, we ate food donated by a charity. I worried that my feet were growing too big for my shoes. How was I going to get to school without something on my feet? Honestly, that was a big anxiety that would keep me up at night.

But then I grew up and went to university. And I learned about money. Soon, I started making enough money to buy myself a bunch of new shoes, if I wanted to spend it that way. (I didn't! I actually hate buying shoes.)

Above all, I gave money my respect. It deserves it. And as a result—whether times are fat or lean—I feel more comfortable with money. Talking about it. Saving it. Spending it. The whole deal. And that's a much better feeling than worrying about being broke.

So what do you think? Are you ready to become more comfortable with that bread, bacon, beans, bucks, or whatever you want to call that cash in your pocket? Turn the page and let's get started...

