

# EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

## EPISODE 161: HOW I CHANGED MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY

What is your relationship with money like? Are you friends? Are you terrified by it? Do you feel gross when we talk about it? Today I'm going to explain what I meant when I said in a recent episode that I improved my relationship with money. I'm also going to give you some ways to work on your own relationship with money.

2 weeks ago, in the Q+A episode, I mentioned that if I could change one thing about growing my business, way back when it started in 2006, I would have started to work on my relationship with money sooner.

I got a lot of feedback from that episode where you said: DO AN EPISODE on that. So that's what we're going to do today: talk about your relationship with money - and mine.

### **First of all, acknowledge that you have a relationship with money.**

We all have a set of beliefs, or stories we tell ourselves, about how money works. The way you feel about money changes how you treat having it, earning it, and saving it.

Before I could change my relationship with money, I had to acknowledge that money wasn't just happening around me; I was interacting with it, I had a relationship with it. And my relationship to it was impacting how I felt, how I acted, and what I did.

Over the years, I've found that my relationships change quickest when I ask helpful questions. Questions that cut through all my stuff and get right to the heart of what's stopping me. In this episode, I'll share those questions with you, so you can ask yourself. Maybe one will really speak to you and the others will sound crazy. At different points in your journey, different questions will be helpful. So use the ones that work and come back to the others when you need them.

My relationship to money didn't improve all at once, although I did have some major epiphanies that I'll try to share here. Changing ANY relationship takes time. I have been working on this consciously since 2013 and I'm still working on a particular area right now.

Let's start by getting some of my personal story out of the way at the beginning - the ways I needed to work on my relationship with money are going to be totally different than yours because we had different parents, different experiences, and have lived in different worlds and subcultures. I was raised in VERY rural southern Ohio mostly by a single mom who went back to school when I was around 8 to become a nurse. We didn't have much money for most of my childhood. My mom was raised by my grandma, who grew up completely secluded in the mountains of East Tennessee with her 9 brothers and sisters and barely enough food. We were all raised in environments where substance abuse, domestic violence, and a strong Christian church were the norms. Thriftiness-is-next-to-godliness and God Always Provides. On the other side of the country, where I visited once a year for a month, my dad has been self-employed as a contractor my whole life and his wife (who is my third parent!) worked in her family's business that HER mom started from scratch as a single mom with three young kids.

Dad's parents ran a small gas station in rural Vermont when he was growing up. Both of my parents joined the Marines as soon as they turned 18. I now make more money with my own business than most of my parents have had for most of their working lives. But it's all relative: many of us could live comfortable with my income. Some of us would barely be scraping by.

So... you can probably guess at some of the ways my relationship with money has been shaped. I am probably more afraid than many of you of not having enough money for food, but much less afraid to be self-employed. It feels risky to me to buy more than one or two pieces of clothing each season, but not at all risky to run a company.

I wanted to start with this so you understand - some of what I'm going to say is going to make NO SENSE to you because your own money issues are completely opposite (maybe you so deeply believe that there will always be plenty that you overspend or don't save?). However, it's my hope that the questions that helped me on my journey can you help you on yours no matter what your relationship to money is like.

## What are the stories you believe about money?

First, you have to understand that everything about money is made up. We just got together and decided that coins and pieces of paper would be how we transfer goods, services, and energy to each other. There is nothing intrinsically valuable about green paper. So everything we believe about money is a story we have told ourselves.

Some popular stories:

- ★ Money is hard to make.
- ★ Money is hard to keep.

- ★ Money is made by doing work you don't like.
- ★ People who have money are horrible people and/or they got it in unethical ways.

And a story that sounds like the opposite but is equally damaging to society:

People who deserve it, have it. People without money haven't worked as hard as people who have it.

Now, as I'm saying these stories, I can practically hear you saying, but Tara, THESE ARE TRUE. I have examples!

That's awesome - your brain is a congruence-seeking machine! When it hears something, it searches its experiences to find examples of it being true or untrue, based on how you believe. If you ask it to find examples of other stories, I bet it can also do that. Try to come up with examples of the following:

- ★ When I have more money, I have more to give.
- ★ When I enjoy my work, I make more money. (And if you have no personal experience of that, change it to "When people enjoy their work, they make more money" - can you think of any examples?)
- ★ Money can make life easier.
- ★ Money is easy to save for important things.
- ★ People make money sharing their gifts with the world with integrity and love.

### **MONEY DOES NOT DETERMINE SELF-WORTH.**

Those are some stories we tell ourselves about money; you may recognize them in your own life (or your friends' lives) or you may have your own particular story. I was on the phone with a friend who's moving and she said this: I'm afraid to get rid of this old furniture, because I believe in using what I have and not wasting money to buy it again.

That's a story - I have to use what I have, because I might not get more. Or, maybe the story was: It would be wasteful to get a table in the future if I have ever owned and gotten rid of a table in the past.

I helped her reframe the story in the following way: If this table came into your life once, it can again. If you had the money to buy it once, you will again.

No money that you spend is wasted; it goes to another person, who is going to use it to fill needs for themselves and their families.

### So here's a story I want you to consider:

Money is a tool we exchange for the stuff we need or want in our lives. We can use it to bring fun, experiences, education, and provide for the needs of ourselves, our families and humanity.

This was an epiphany I had a few years ago.

I had bought a green smoothie at the local health food shop, which seemed like SUCH an extravagance. I drank it while I worked with clients and wrote a new class. I had SUCH a good work day. It hit me as I was driving home - I got the money to spend on the smoothie from helping a client. I gave it to a local business and in exchange got a green smoothie, which fueled a session helping a client and making a class that would help more people. In exchange, they'd give me money, which I'd disperse into the world in exchange for the stuff (like another green smoothie) which keeps me going.

I mean, that seems obvious, because that's how money works, right? But what I realized is that sometimes I forget that I'm part of the flow of money through the world. I get stuck thinking: Should I charge this much for my work? And, Should I spend money on that? Is that too expensive? But it's all connected. When I charge money for my work, I use the money to fuel my work and create more of it.

I was telling my mom about this epiphany and the flow of money as being a much more ease-ful way of seeing money and she quoted her pastor (Pastor Bobby, he is very quotable) - "God can't get it to you, if He can't get it through you."

In other words, when you hold on too tight, when you don't let it flow around you and through you, your hands aren't open to receive more.

A less church-y way to say it is "Believe in an abundant universe where there's enough for everyone."

### A question here to ask yourself is:

Do I believe that money flows both to me and from me? Where am I stopping the flow? Where am I holding so tightly that I can't see what else is available?

In my epiphany, another realization I had was that I get paid MONEY in exchange for the value I provide, but I soon translate it into value for myself.

This is an important realization when it comes to having your own business and making money - if I think I'm just getting MONEY... well, money isn't something I actually care much about. Remember, money is a tool to be exchanged for something I actually value. So when students are feeling weird about their pricing or their own money goals, I often ask:

*If money is going to be exchanged for something else, what are you going to exchange this for?*

When people set big goals for their biz and then fail to reach them month after month, I find the problem is usually that they have a money goal that they thought was impressive or was the "next thing" they "should" do... but the money number doesn't MEAN anything to them.

For example, maybe you see bloggers say they had a "six figure month," so you think, I want a "six figure month" or even a "six figure year." But in order for that to be a goal that you can actually work to, you have to translate it - do you want to have 100,000 in SALES? What is that in terms of profit, in YOUR biz? I talk more about this in [episode 147](#).

First, translate the jargon into actual numbers. Then, translate those numbers into WHAT YOU REALLY WANT. Because you don't actually want the pile of money, you want the things or experiences the money will buy.

For example, I don't want to make \$10,000/month just to HAVE it. I want it in order to:

- ★ Easily pay my bills
- ★ Pay the people who make my business easier a good wage
- ★ Go to the UK for a few weeks
- ★ Buy a new record player
- ★ Afford my dogs' heartworm medication
- ★ Look like a good bet for a loan, so we can buy the local comic book shop

I find this question useful both when it comes to EARNING money and to SPENDING money. As long as I'm thinking of money as cash dollars, I have a hard time either being motivated by it... or spending it (what if we need for something else?!). But if I can tap into what I really want BEHIND the cash, I can make better decisions.

For example, I had a lot of resistance to buying a couch, even after getting rid of an old, 10 year old, cat-scratched, dog-puked couch. We literally didn't have any couch and only one comfy chair for 3 months after we moved in 2016. We couldn't both sit down at the same time in our living room.

So I asked myself:

- ★ What am I translating this money into? A couch.
- ★ What does the couch MEAN? Snuggling, homey-ness, comfort.
- ★ What is more conducive to snuggling? A couch or a stacked up pile of \$500? Oh, yeah, ok, the couch makes a lot of sense.

So whether you're looking at making a certain amount of money or you're looking at spending a certain amount of money... if you are feeling unsure or stressed or freaked out, ask yourself: What does this REALLY MEAN for me and my life?

### Another question that really helped me:

What are you afraid of? Can we track the reality of that fear?

Ok, so I had this fear/belief that money would just... dissipate. And my everyday experiences seemed to prove this out. I'd get a raise and never felt like we had more money. Or I'd get a check for a big wholesale order... and my car would explode.

So it kept me constantly TIGHT. I was so afraid to spend anything, because what if we need it next week?

This is related to the belief that we have to hold onto what we have, because maybe no more is coming.

The one tool that helped me move past this more than anything is actually really mundane: a budgeting app.

Specifically [YouNeedABudget.com](http://YouNeedABudget.com).

Now, we had tried stuff before, but the reason this worked so well is because unlike every other app I've tried, it is built for variable income. You don't put in your monthly income ahead of time, you put in money AS YOU MAKE IT. Then you budget it for what it needs to go to. You basically tell the app to put the income you just made into the categories for various needs and bills. That whole process took maybe 15 minutes once a week (I did it on Fridays). And then, you track spending and put each thing you spend in a category - it keeps a running tally of what you have left to spend in that category.

What this did for me was a few things:

- ★ Show me where our money really went (organic veggies, yarn and movies, anyone?)

★ GAVE ME PERMISSION to spend money. Once the bill categories were full, I would allocate money to fun categories +... we could spend them!

I used this app daily for 2-3 years and it totally changed my relationship with money and my variable income. I don't use it any more, because I don't need it - the concept and the new way of thinking about money is now in my head, so I don't need to use it in the app.

Another reason the app worked is that it helped me stop avoiding things. Avoiding was VERY big for me, in the first 5 years of my adulthood. It's actually embarrassing to even talk about - I avoided opening up envelopes, I avoided looking at the bank accounts, I avoided having conversations about money, I avoided shopping for anything. I see now it's a classic sign of Anxiety disorder, but at the time it just felt TOO HARD. The app was a good way to help get me looking at the numbers regularly.

And here's one of the principles of a happy relationship with money: You gotta get comfortable with how it works.

This comes in form of two questions:

What are you avoiding?

How much time do you spend with your money?

Now! There's a difference between "spending time worrying about money" and "spending time doing something constructive with money" in the same way there's a difference between "time worrying about your biz" and "time taking action in your biz."

Speaking of worry, I stopped using the app when it from a tool to help me Stop Avoiding and it became a tool I used to obsess and control. When I found myself having more expendable income and yet more stress updating the app, I decided to stop it. The thing my relationship with money needed next was to LET GO trying to control everything... while still not going into avoidance.

Now, I have a few more questions you can work with, along with my favorite tools and resources. I've linked up all the tools and books at the podcast page - [taraswiger.com/podcast161](https://taraswiger.com/podcast161)

### **A few more questions:**

What do you need to heal in your past, related to money? Who do you need to forgive?

Are you hitting your Upper Limit (sabotaging yourself because you're not sure you can handle SO MUCH GOODNESS)?

Journal on these questions, think on them, talk over them with your friends. I feel like I could talk for a million more minutes about this, so please let me know if you liked this and if you want more. If you love it, share it! Post on instagram your own answer to one of the questions and use the hashtag #exploreyourenthusiasm.

## MY FAVE TOOLS:

[YouNeedaBudget.com](http://YouNeedaBudget.com)

[Godaddy Bookkeeping](http://GodaddyBookkeeping.com) (If you wanna see how this works for other bookkeeping software, sign up for the transcript of this episode in the box below!)

## RESOURCES:

[The Big Leap](#) by Gay Hendricks

[Playing Big](#) by Tara Mohr

[Desire Map](#) by Danielle LaPorte

Denise Duffield-Thomas (her [newest class](#) is now open + it looks great!)