

PART ONE

INFORMATION is not ENOUGH



MONEY STRESS IS HIGHER THAN EVER; 80% OF PEOPLE SAY MONEY IS THEIR #1 STRESSOR.

FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE DOESN'T CHANGE BEHAVIOUR. EMOTIONAL HISTORY DOES.

Knowing what we **should do financially isn't the same as doing it**. Every woman in this
room has probably told herself at some point,
'I know better... so why can't I do better?'.

The answer is simple and powerful:

Money is emotional, not logical.



WHY IS MONEY SO COSUMING?

Money affects our **physical needs**, but it also impacts nearly all of our **emotional needs**, like **security**, **belonging**, **autonomy**, **status**, **identity**.

When money is unstable, our entire emotional foundation shakes.

This is especially true for women. We manage the invisible labour of

- · family finances
- caregiving
- home stability
- emotional wellbeing

MONEY STRESS BECOMES LIFE STRESS.



EMOTIONAL NEEDS DRIVE MONEY BEHAVIOUR

Money stops being a tool and it becomes a measure of our **value**, **belonging**, or **safety**. That's why behaviours like overspending, avoidance, or overworking **aren't about willpower**.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS TIED TO MONEY:

- SECURITY
- ATTENTION (GIVING & RECEIVING)
- AUTONOMY & CONTROL
- EMOTIONAL CONNECTION
- FEELING PART OF A COMMUNITY
- INTIMACY & ACCEPTANCE
- PRIVACY & REFLECTION
- STATUS & RECOGNITION
- COMPETENCE & ACHIEVEMENT
- MEANING & PURPOSE

Many of us internalize money messages like:

- 'Be grateful for what you get.'
- 'Don't be greedy.'
- 'Nice women don't talk about money.'
- 'Rich people are evil'

Spending habits are often just coping strategies.



WHY WE TURN TO "ESCAPE BEHAVIORS"

When life feels unstable, we reach for soothing. Not logic.

When life feels shaky, we want quick relief.

Stress → automatic coping behaviours.

All our bodies are trying to do is regulate fear or shame. Many of us cope with money stress through shopping, caretaking or overworking. **These are all soothing** behaviours.



PART TWO

UNDERSTANDING your BRAIN

Inside each of us lives a crocodile, a monkey, and a scientist.



CROCODILE → REPTILIAN BRAIN

Survival, instinct, fight/flight/freeze. She's fast, reactive, concerned only with survival. **In financial stress, your crocodile is running the show.**



MONKEY → LIMBIC/EMOTIONAL BRAIN

Feelings, memories, impulses. She swings from idea to idea, feeling to feeling, trying to protect you from emotional discomfort.



SCIENTIST → NEOCORTEX

Logic, planning, decision-making. She is brilliant at planning, analyzing, budgeting, strategizing... But she's also the slowest. In financial stress, the crocodile and monkey take over before she even gets a chance.

YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM CHOOSES FOR YOU. LONG BEFORE LOGIC ENTERS THE CHAT.

FIGHT

FLIGHT

ARGUING ABOUT MONEY

AVOIDING STATEMENTS

OVERSPENDING TO "TAKE CONTROL"

NOT OPENING MAIL

RAGE-SHOPPING OR FINANCIAL BLAME

NEVER CHECKING ACCOUNTS

FREEZE

DECISION PARALYSIS

NOT INVESTING

STAYING STUCK WHILE OPTIONS PASS BY

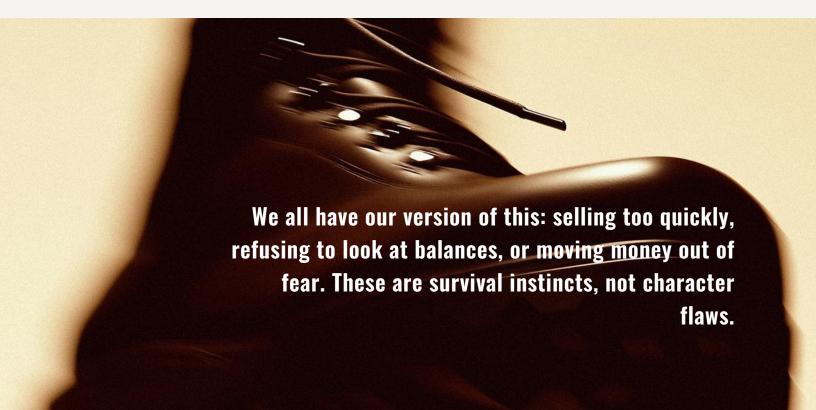
ANXIETY HIJACKS THE BRAIN. FEAR TAKES
THE WHEEL.

Our brains react to financial stress the same way they react to physical danger.

And, when we're in this state (survival mode), we're not making a thoughtful investment plan. We're just trying to feel safe.

Real Financial Reactions

- People cashing out retirement accounts suddenly
- Stockpiling guns, gold, or canned food after fear spikes
- Freezing investments because they fear loss
- 4 Following doomsday predictions instead of advisors



FOUR STEPS TO RECLAIM RATIONAL CONTROL

01

RECOGNIZE EMOTIONAL HIJACK.

LABEL IT: "THIS
IS FEAR
TALKING."

02

TAKE DEEP BREATHS.

RE-CENTERS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

03

EVALUATE YOUR THINKING

"IS THIS TRUE?
WHAT EVIDENCE
DO I HAVE?"

04

DON'T MAKE RASH DECISIONS.

WAIT 20
MINUTES. THE
EMOTIONAL BRAIN
QUIETS DOWN.



We can train the brain to stay calm under financial stress.

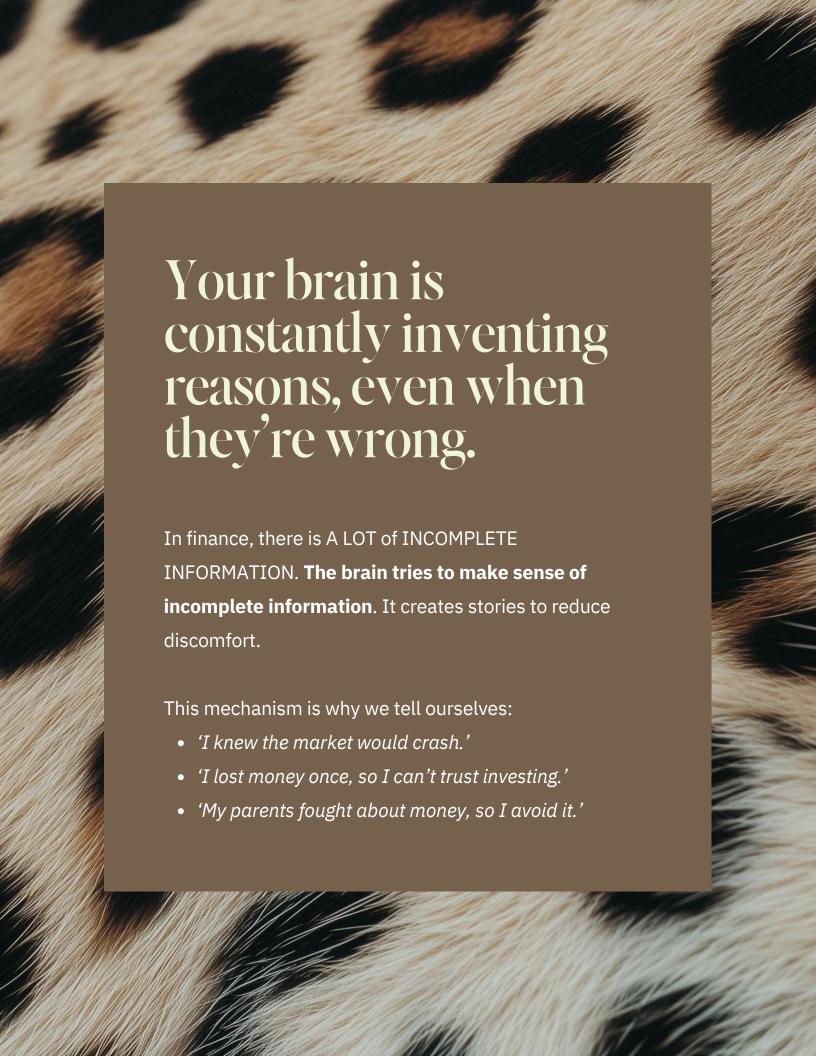
- Practice creates automatic responses
- Training rewires emotional patterns
- Real-life stories: soldiers, EMTs, pilots
- Financial training is emotional training

REPEATING SMALL, CONSISTENT FINANCIAL HABITS BUILDS RESILIENCE.

YOUR BRAIN LEARNS:
'I CAN SURVIVE THIS.'

OVER TIME, THE CROCODILE GETS QUIETER."







We follow the herd because we're human.

EVEN WHEN WE THINK WE'RE INDEPENDENT, WE ARE DEEPLY SHAPED BY OUR GROUP:

- FAMILY
- COMMUNITY
- CULTURE
- COLLEAGUES.

THIS INSTINCT KEPT OUR ANCESTORS ALIVE. TODAY, IT SHAPES OUR CAREERS, SPENDING, SAVING, INVESTING, AND EVEN OUR FINANCIAL FEARS.

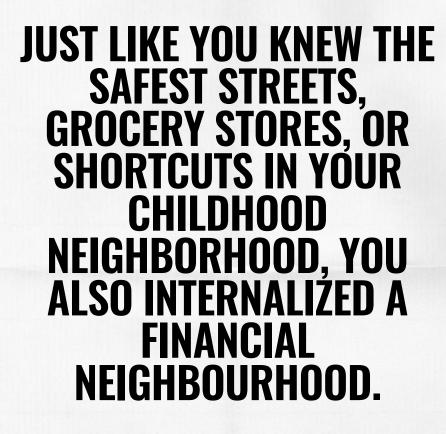
FEAR OF EXCLUSION IS MORE POWERFUL THAN THE DESIRE FOR WEALTH.

Will my choices get me kicked out of my group?

Will I be judged?



That instinct is so automatic we often don't realize it's happening.



That neighborhood shaped what you believe about debt, savings, **spending**, **generosity**, and **risk**.

Your 'financial neighbourhood' shapes your beliefs, behaviours, and limits.

Moving beyond it (up or down) activates emotional alarms.

What Your Financial Comfort Zone Determines

These boundaries are inherited, not chosen. And when we try to grow beyond them, our emotional brain often panics.

BEHAVIOURAL BOUNDARIES

IDENTITY BOUNDARIES

- HOW MUCH WE THINK WE SHOULD EARN
- PEOPLE LIKE US..."
- WHAT KINDS OF PURCHASES FEEL 'REASONABLE'
- ► "PEOPLE LIKE ME DON'T..."
- HOW MUCH RISK FEELS SAFE
- ► FEAR OF JUDGMENT
- HOW WE INTERPRET FINANCIAL STRESS
- FEAR OF ABANDONMENT
- HOW WE TALK ABOUT MONEY
- LOYALTY TO FAMILY OR
 CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS



WHEN WE DROP BELOW OUR COMFORT ZONE

Losing income, moving down the ladder, or being in scarcity is deeply destabilizing.

Examples:

- Losing financial stability activates fear of shame and exclusion.
- People may overspend in an attempt to "look like they still belong."
- Fear can cause denial, avoidance, or risky financial choices.

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION: THE COMPARISON TRAP



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Is more always better?: A survey on positional concerns

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Abstract

We use survey data to provide some empirical information about concerns regarding relative standing. Respondents chose between a world where they have more of a good than others and one where everyone's endowment of the good is higher, but the respondent has less than others. Questions asked about education, attractiveness and intelligence for one's child and oneself, income, vacation time, approval and disapproval from a supervisor, and papers to write. Half of the respondents preferred to have 50% less real income but high relative income. Concerns about position were strongest for attractiveness and supervisor's praise and weakest for vacation time. © 1998 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

The Harvard
Study: We'd
rather make less
money, as long
as we make
more than
others.

Researchers at Harvard asked students to choose between two income scenarios:

1. Option A:

You earn \$50,000 while everyone else earns \$25,000.

2. Option B:

You earn \$100,000 while everyone else earns \$200,000.

Logically, Option B is better — it's twice the income. But the majority chose Option A.

Why?

- · We measure wealth relatively, not absolutely.
- Belonging, status, and comparison matter more than actual dollars.
- · Feeling "ahead of the group" brings more psychological comfort than earning more money.

Women are socialized to maintain harmony, connection, and relatability.

"IF I EARN MORE, WILL MY PARTNER FEEL THREATENED?"

"IF I SUCCEED, WILL MY FRIENDS RESENT ME?"

"IF I SPEND DIFFERENTLY, WILL I SEEM OUT OF PLACE?"

"IF I LEVEL UP, WILL PEOPLE THINK I'M TRYING TO BE BETTER THAN THEM?"

THE HARD PART: BREAKING FREE FROM THE HERD

For women especially, leaving a herd can trigger fear of judgment, guilt, or comparison. **But awareness gives you power.**

- BECOME AWARE OF EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS.
- IDENTIFY COMFORT-ZONE BELIEFS YOU INHERITED.
- SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE IN THE ZONE YOU WANT TO GROW INTO.
- NORMALIZE FINANCIAL DISCOMFORT AS PART OF GROWTH.
- LEARN THE MONEY NORMS OF THE "NEW" ZONE.
- PREPARE EMOTIONALLY, NOT JUST FINANCIALLY.

Duringthese unprecedented times, there's a prevalence of fear and anxiety among many people; ironically, at some level, it is comforting.



WHAT IS A FINANCIAL FLASHPOINT?

Financial Flashpoints = emotionally intense money experiences that create long-lasting beliefs, fears, and behaviours.

These ever

These events often happen in childhood.

02

They feel shocking, unfair, unsafe, or deeply emotional.

03

They become "money scripts": patterns we repeat without realizing.

04

The more traumatic the event, the more rigid the behaviour later.

FAMILY FINANCIAL TRAUMA

KIDS WITNESS ADULT
ARGUMENTS, FEAR, SCARCITY,
SHAME. THEY DEVELOP SCRIPTS
LIKE:

- "WE DON'T DESERVE GOOD THINGS."
- "RICH PEOPLE ARE GREEDY."
- "MONEY CAUSES PAIN."
- "HAVING MONEY MAKES YOU A TARGET."

THEY GROW UP AVOIDING OR MISTRUSTING MONEY.

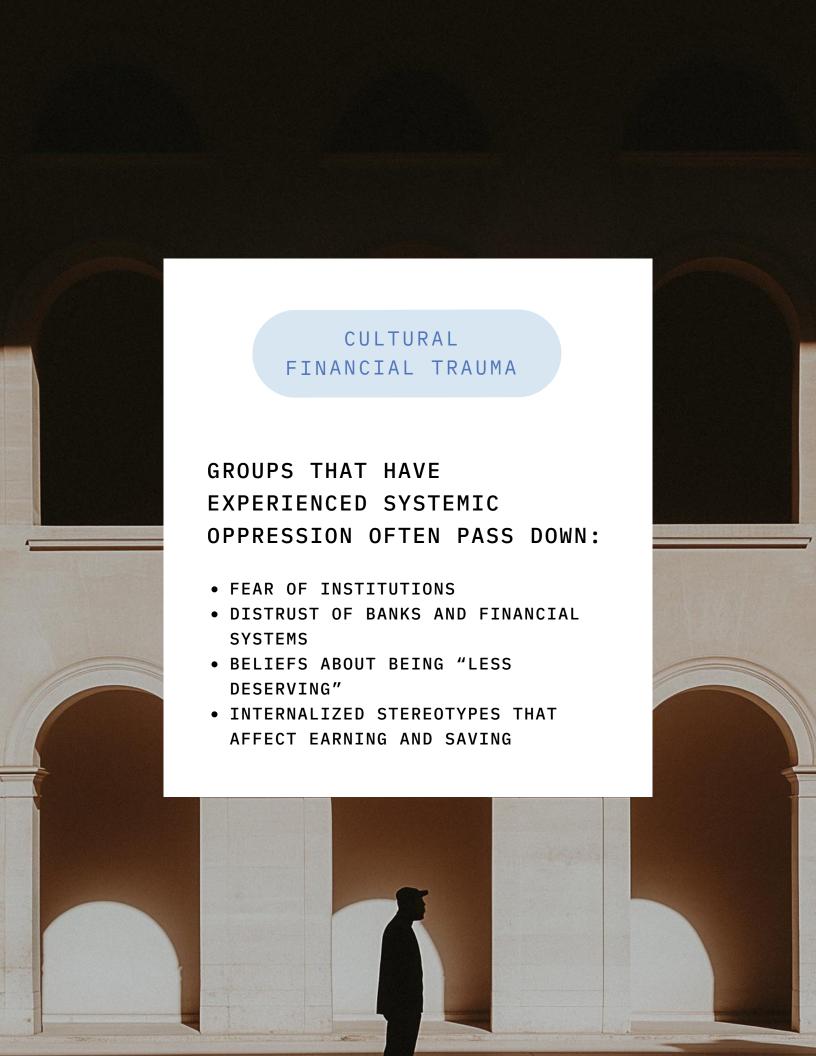
SOCIOECONOMIC TRAUMA

GROWING UP IN POVERTY OR NEAR-POVERTY SENDS MESSAGES LIKE:

- "THERE'S NEVER ENOUGH."
- "SOMEONE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU."
- "MONEY DISAPPEARS FAST."
- "SURVIVAL IS OUR ONLY GOAL"

LONG-TERM EFFECTS:

- DIFFICULTY PLANNING LONG-TERM
- FEAR OF LOSING WHAT YOU GAIN
- SELF-SABOTAGE DURING PERIODS OF SUCCESS
- CHRONIC HYPERVIGILANC





WOMEN OFTEN INHERIT GENDER-SPECIFIC MONEY SCRIPTS:

- "MEN SHOULD HANDLE MONEY."
- "WOMEN AREN'T GOOD WITH FINANCES."
- "MONEY IS TIED TO SAFETY, NOT EMPOWERMENT."
- "DON'T TALK ABOUT MONEY, IT'S UNLADYLIKE."
- "BE GRATEFUL, NOT AMBITIOUS."



What Is a Money Disorder?

Persistent, predictable, rigid patterns of financial behavior that cause:

- Stress & anxiety
- Emotional conflict
- Impairment in major life areas
- Self-sabotage or avoidance

WHERE MONEY DISORDERS COME FROM?

- Family dysfunction or secrecy
- Emotional turmoil around money
- · Cultural and gendered messaging
- Childhood trauma, scarcity, or shame
- Attempts to self-soothe through money habits
- Unresolved "unfinished business"

SYMPTOMS OF MONEY DISORDERS

- Anxiety or dread around finances
- Overspending or compulsive buying
- · Avoiding bills, accounts, or planning
- Conflict with loved ones about money
- Chronic financial instability
- Feeling undeserving or fearful of wealth

WHAT HEALTHY LOOKS LIKE

REASONABLE, LOW DEBT

ACTIVE SAVINGS PLAN

CONSCIOUS SPENDING

SUPPORTIVE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

LIFE SATISFACTION + LOW FINANCIAL STRESS

Scripts that equate money with:

- Fear
- Moral contamination
- Family conflict
- Shame or unworthiness

Common belief:

"Money is bad, stressful, or unsafe.

Better to avoid it."



MONEY-AVOIDANCE

Common Money-Avoidance Scripts

- "It's wrong to have more than others."
- "Money I haven't earned isn't real."
- "I don't deserve to have money."
- "Good people shouldn't care about money."
- "Being wealthy will change me."
- "Money corrupts."
- "Having money will push people away."

Forms of Money Avoidance



FINANCIAL DENIAL:

A DEFENSIVE STRATEGY TO AVOID SHAME AND FEAR BY NOT LOOKING AT MONEY.

- NOT CHECKING ACCOUNT BALANCES
- IGNORING BILLS
- AVOIDING FINANCIAL CONVERSATIONS
- PRETENDING PROBLEMS AREN'T HAPPENING



FINANCIAL REJECTION:

BELIEF THAT "I DON'T DESERVE MONEY" OR THAT MONEY IS UNSAFE, UNFAIR, OR MORALLY TAINTED.

BEHAVIORS:

- GIVING MONEY AWAY
- UNDEREARNING
- REJECTING WINDFALLS
- SABOTAGING FINANCIAL PROGRESS



NOT FRUGALITY. FEAR-DRIVEN RESTRICTION. BEHAVIORS:

- FEELING GUILTY BUYING NECESSITIES
- CHOOSING DEPRIVATION
- LIVING FAR BELOW ONE'S MEANS
- MAKING LIFE UNNECESSARILY SMALL

EXCESSIVE RISK AVERSION

WHEN PEOPLE:

- AVOID ALL INVESTMENTS
- REFUSE OPPORTUNITIES OUT OF FEAR
- STAY IN UNDERPAID ROLES
- OVERFOCUS ON "SAFETY"
- ARE TERRIFIED OF MAKING MISTAKES

Placing too much **importance on money**, earning, or spending.

Fairy-tale script:

"More money will fix everything."

Behaviours include:

- Workaholism
- Compulsive buying
- Hoarding
- Pathological gambling
- Unreasonable risk taking



MONEY-WORSHIPING DISORDERS

Common Money-Worship Scripts

- "More money will make me happier."
- "You can't trust people around money."
- "There will never be enough."
- "I need to spend to feel alive."
- "If I don't work constantly, I'll lose everything."

Forms of Money Worshipping

HOARDING: A PHYSICAL
MANIFESTATION OF:
"I MUST KEEP EVERYTHING
BECAUSE NOTHING IS
SECURE."

PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING:

WOMEN OFTEN GAMBLE TO ESCAPE EMOTIONAL PAIN, NOT FOR THRILL.

OVERSPENDING & COMPULSIVE BUYING:

ESCAPE FROM:

- LONELINESS
- STRESS
- SHAME
- FEELING "NOT ENOUGH"



TAKING: WOMEN RAISED
AROUND INSTABILITY MAY
SWING BETWEEN:
HYPER-CAUTION ↔ HYPERRISK

THIS PENDULUM IS EXTREMELY COMMON.

WORKAHOLISM:

- "I MUST EARN SAFETY."
- "REST IS DANGEROUS."
- "I'M ONLY VALUABLE WHEN PRODUCING."

WOMEN ESPECIALLY
INTERNALIZE THIS DUE TO
SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS
OF CAPABILITY AND SELFSACRIFICE.



RELATIONAL MONEY DISORDERS

How Money Scripts Shape Our Closest Relationships

What Makes a Money Disorder "Relational"?

- Financial Incest
- Financial Infidelity
 Financial Enabling
 - Financial Dependency

Key Characteristics

- Occur between people
- Involve secrecy, control, avoidance, or overresponsibility
- Trigger cycles of shame, conflict, and confusion
- Passed down through families unless interrupted



WHEN MONEY BECOMES A SECRET

FINANCIAL INFIDELITY

Hiding money decisions from a partner: spending, saving, using credit, making purchases, or keeping accounts secret.

Why It Matters

- Erodes trust
- Creates power imbalances
- Is often rooted in fear or shame, not malicious intent

How Financial Infidelity Shows Up

- Secret credit cards or loans
- Hidden purchases
- Undisclosed savings or inheritance
- Lying about the cost of items
- Withholding financial information\



A DISTORTION OF ROLES

FINANCIAL INCEST

When a parent uses money to meet their own emotional needs rather than the child's.

Treating a child like:

- A confidante
- A financial partner
- An emotional caretaker

Signs of Financial Incest

- Child responsible for adult financial decisions
- · Parent shares financial fears or burdens with child
- Money used to buy love or loyalty
- · Child rewarded for emotional caretaking
- Child punished financially for asserting independence



WHEN LOVE AND MONEY GET TANGLED

FINANCIAL ENABLING

Giving money or resources in excess of what is healthy.

Even when:

- · You can't afford it
- It prevents the other person from growing
- It harms your own financial stability

Why Financial Enabling Happens

- Guilt
- Desire to rescue
- Fear of conflict or rejection
- Trying to repair old wounds
- Overidentifying with someone else's struggle



THE "PRINCE CHARMING" SCRIPT

FINANCIAL DEPENDENCY

Relying on someone else for financial survival when able to be self-supporting.

Red Flags

- Avoiding learning money skills
- Feeling unable to take care of yourself
- Handing over all financial decisions
- Staying in unhealthy situations to avoid financial responsibility

Common beliefs

- "Someone else will take care of me."
- "I'm not capable of handling money."
- "Money is too confusing/scary for me."

HEALING

IDENTIFY YOUR INHERITED
MONEY ROLES

Caretaker, avoider, rescuer, controller, dependent.

NAME THE EMOTIONS BEHIND THE BEHAVIOR

Fear, shame, loneliness, guilt, resentment.

SET BOUNDARIES WITH COMPASSION

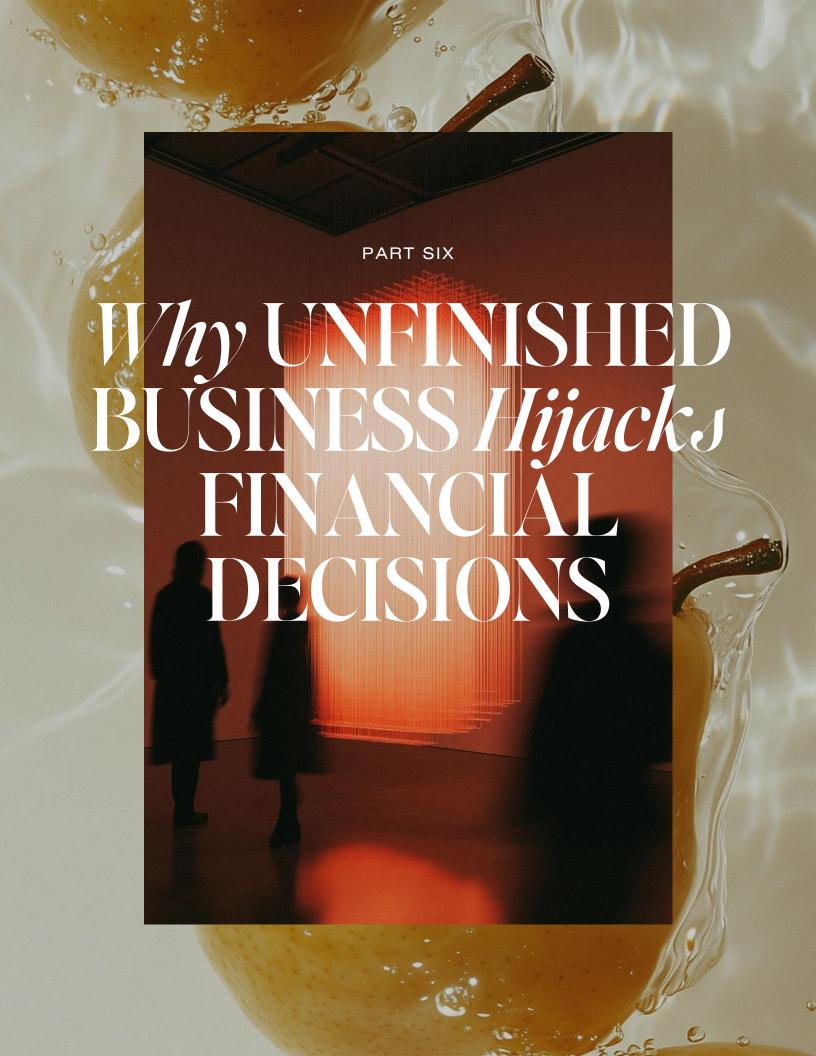
For yourself and others.

PRACTICE FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

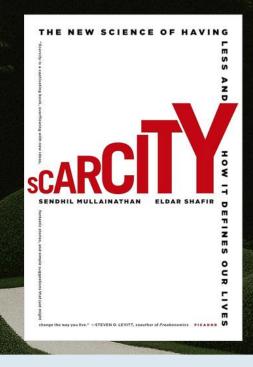
With partners, adult children, or trusted advisors.

BUILD PERSONAL FINANCIAL COMPETENCE

Skills = confidence = autonomy.



When the brain is preoccupied with unresolved stress or trauma, it has less capacity for good decision-making.



HARVARD RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT SCARCITY (
WHETHER OF MONEY, TIME, SAFETY, OR EMOTIONAL
SECURITY) CREATES A "BANDWIDTH TAX" ON THE
BRAIN.

THAT TAX:

- REDUCES WORKING MEMORY
- IMPAIRS IMPULSE CONTROL
- INCREASES TUNNEL VISION
- MAKES LONG-TERM PLANNING HARDER

Shame and Guilt Are the Biggest Obstacle to Financial Healing

- Guilt: "I did something wrong"
- Shame: "I am something wrong"

HEALING REQUIRES:

Accepting responsibility (without self-attack)
Understanding intent and context
Confession (safe disclosure)
Repair
Reparative action
Seeking help if patterns repeat

You cannot shame yourself into financial health; but you can heal yourself into it."

Before we can change money behavior, we have to calm the body that learned money was agugerous.



the invisible box.

Our beliefs are constructed. And anything constructed can be reconstructed.

Breaking out of the box means:

- choosing awareness over autopilot,
- responding instead of reacting,
- practicing new scripts even when old ones show up,
- and committing to progress, not perfection.

Financial health isn't a finish line. It's a relationship you keep tending, refining, and strengthening.

And the most important thing to remember is:

- You are not broken.
- Your patterns make sense.
- And change is absolutely possible.



Your financial behaviors make sense in the context of your history.
And when you understand that history, you can begin to choose differently.

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