J. Walstedt

Now let me turn the program over to Cynthia Dawkins from the Wi$e Up Team in the Women’s Bureau National office, who will introduce our second speaker. Cynthia?

C. Dawkins

Thank you, Jane. Susan Zimmerman is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Chartered Financial Consultant who has been helping people with financial life transitions and relationship matters for over 20 years. She is author of *The Power in Your Money Personality: 8 Ways to Balance Your Urge to Splurge With Your Craving for Saving*, a book that characterizes eight money rascal types that can make mischief with your money behavior and steer you in the wrong direction.

Susan is a speaker on many topics related to finance, family, and personal growth. She has been featured in much local and national media, including the *Washington Post, L.A. Times, Women’s World, St. Paul Pioneer Press, and First for Women*. Susan’s newest book is *Rays of Hope in Times of Loss: Courage and Comfort for Grieving Hearts*. Please welcome Susan Zimmerman.
Hi, everybody, it’s really great to be here. You know, it’s always exciting for me to talk to groups of younger people because one of the most motivational things I ever learned when I went into the financial planning business--and frankly it made me mad too--but it was learning about the time value of money. I’ve done hundreds of thousands of calculations in that. The truth of the matter is so many of us lose, not just a year or so of time when it comes to saving money, but will lose a whole decade or more.

Since you are all young in the audience by my definition, please know that for every decade of time you lose, it takes about three times as much money to reach the same goal. I found that very motivational.

I became interested in money styles and money personalities a few years into my practice because a client of mine was a marriage counselor and she asked if the marriage counselors in her clinic could start sending couples to me who were fighting about money.

Now I was already a Chartered Financial Consultant and CLU [Chartered Life Underwriter] and I had all those awful tests behind me. You know, conflict resolution was something I didn’t know about, and that’s what got me into the graduate program for
marriage and family therapy, because money just isn’t about
calculating the numbers, is it? It’s good – little tidbits are good to
know, but some people hate doing the calculations. Probably the
catalyst for my book, what got the book to happen, was in the last
few days of my father’s life, he and my mother were still fighting
about money.

So, Olivia, just the title of your book, *Money Harmony*, has always
spoken to me, because in some households, isn’t it true, that there
never was harmony on the money front? The fact that my parents
were still in high frustration about money, because of their
different styles, even when my dad was dying, got me very
interested in what could be done to help people, because no two
people who are married together or in a relationship that involves
sharing of money have exactly the same outlook.

Now in my money personalities in the book, I named them the
money rascals because of the mischief they make in people’s
money lives. I have a chart in the book that’s called the delightful
and the frightful sides, and it summarizes the eight types. What is
a good trait, or what I would call the delightful traits, and what are
the not so delightful? What are the things that might cause
problems in a person’s financial life?
My dad-- since I shared that personal story--my dad was what, in my book, I always called flashers--the ones that like flashy purchases. So when they do buy--although they may not be frequent shoppers--they are spending a lot of money when they do it. My mother was on the opposite end of this continuum, where she was always a saver and she liked to stash her money. Olivia, you would call that a hoarder, and so they were always in perpetual clash mode.

The people we see the most in our financial planning business are what we call clashers. Clashers are people who--it’s almost no matter what you do with your money; you’re kind of beating yourself up. If you’re saving it or stashing it--we have a money personality we call stasher--then you’re kind of bummer at yourself because you would really like to go out and spend. That’s what I call the splurge--that urge to splurge that happens. Yet when you’re spending, you feel guilty, because you feel like, jeez, I shouldn’t have been buying this, maybe I should take it back, and you go through all these troubling clashing thoughts.

So what we do with the clasher is sometimes just getting out of the -- what I say is, “Don’t hesitate to calculate.” What we do is--a big
part of it is doing some calculations for people, so that you can see the answer to, “Well, how much really should I be saving?”

Because then when I’m spending, at least I can do it guilt-free. That’s a lot of times what, frankly, just isn’t getting done in our country.

I called the – then there’s all the underlying belief systems that so often-- I think, Olivia, you would agree--a lot of our thoughts about money are actually rather unconscious. They’re out of our conscious awareness, and I call those the COOL/FOOL Rules. COOL is an acronym for Culture of Origin Lessons, and FOOL is an acronym for Family of Origin Lessons. But the problem is a lot of those unconscious rules are – come from distorted thinking, or an interpretation of life events that causes you to treat money in a way that actually is not all that accurate.

There was a psychologist once that said, “Children are great observers, but lousy interpreters.” So you may have memories or life experiences around money. Like even mine--because there was never any harmony on the money front--I kind of came out of it, growing up in an adult world then with money is something you fight about. It’s interesting how that can become almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. So these COOL/FOOL Rules are little
expectations around money that are unconscious, that
unfortunately steer our behavior all too often.

On the flasher one, I was going to give you a couple of flasher
ideas of that. The point of understanding your COOL and FOOL
Rules though is to recognize them and then know that you can
reconstruct them and start to tame those rascals that are making
mischief in your money life. That’s where the behaviors start to
change, and it is exactly like, what Olivia would call-- what do you
call it, Olivia? Practicing--

O. Mellan  Practicing the non-habitual.

S. Zimmerman  The non-habitual, right. And the thing that I didn’t realize until I
really studied psychology is that our thinking habits, or our thought
process, can be a habit that we’ve established--that even that can
be something that we tame and learn to think in new ways, and that
can help making changes in habits go a little more smoothly,
because I’m sure a lot of you have tried changing various habits
that you yourself have identified you want to change, and even
when you want to, it’s hard.
So, I would say, reconstructing them. Like a flasher would say, “Life isn’t fun unless you’re buying the best and the most expensive item.” Well that can get you in trouble if you can’t afford the best and most expensive item. A clasher—the type of clash a clasher would have would be, “I’m only good if I’m buying the least expensive item,” but then they might have another thought that says, “It’s only good if I’m buying the most expensive item.” There’s like no tiebreaker for how do you know when to apply which rule? So it’s in that constant inner conflict. Then of course, then the conflict can become outer, when you’re in a relationship and you have very different outlooks about money.

The other thing I say as a motto—and you may notice I like to rhyme things – I mean, in my money personality I won’t go over all of them, but it’s flasher, rasher, clasher, dasher, asher, basher, cashier, stasher. They’re all named for what the most dominant trait is that tends to cause the most mischief. Like, rasher is one of the spenders for being rash and impulsive with money.

So what I say is, it’s great to name your money personality and claim it, so you know what you are. The most important thing is to tame it, and taming is doing, like what Olivia calls practicing the non-habitual. Just understanding where the imbalance is and
starting to get them balanced out, so that you’ve got a little bit of everything going on.

Also, don’t blame your money personality and also don’t blame whoever it is that you perceive has given you some bad notions about money. It’s about moving forward from today and seeing your journey as an adventure, because we all have gone into our young adult lives with some pretty goofy ideas about money; and taming those rascals can be the most exciting thing you can do.

My Web site, by the way, you can just go to Money Rascals and there’s information there, more information about it in the books and stuff like that. Money Rascals.

**J. Walstedt** Is that it, Susan?

**S. Zimmerman** I think that is basically it because there will be questions, and I’m trying not to go over my ten minutes.

**J. Walstedt** Okay, you’re fine. I’m not ending this prematurely, right? You’re through? You didn’t have anything more?

**S. Zimmerman** Well, one other thing I might add is that just—I’ve learned a funny statistic about financial behavior recently, and that is that ones on
the cashier side, the people who like cash money and they’re afraid
of the market and so they tend to maybe even put their money
under mattresses, or you know, the most risk they’ll take is putting
it in a money market--cashers really feel good about cash and
sometimes that’s very literal. I can’t tell you how many stories
clients have told me about their parents or their – a lot of times
they’re telling stories about their elderly relatives who have a lot of
cash hiding under rugs and inside walls and things like that.

The statistic I just saw the other day, that I thought was pretty
funny, is 1.5% of the people in this large survey admitted that
they’ve actually ironed their cash. So I would say that would be an
extreme cashier, because you not only want the cash but you want it
darn crisp.

J. Walstedt Well, thank you so much, Susan, I can really identify with what
you said about your parents, because I think to a certain extent, my
parents were the same way.