

How is Your Wealth-Esteem?

by Ian Watson

Too Little.....or Too Much?

Many of us struggle with the idea that we don't have enough money to do or to have some of the things we would like, or even to pay for the things we are already doing and having. But just suppose for a moment you had the opposite problem. Imagine having so much money that you realized you would never find enough things to spend it on in your lifetime.

Spare a thought for seventy-five year old Warren Buffet, second-richest man in the world, who faced exactly that conundrum earlier this year. The poor (i.e. rich) chap had a cool \$30 billion to dispose of, and time was clearly running out. Not only that, being the smart investor that he was, his fortune was continuing to grow at a phenomenal rate, presumably in spite of his best efforts to spend some of it.

The obvious solution of course is to simply give the money away, but can you imagine how difficult that would be in practical terms? Who are you going to give it to? Which cause is more deserving than another? How can you ensure that it is put to good use? How are you going to tell all those people who would like some of your fortune that they can't have any? And *how would all of that make you feel?*

What quickly becomes clear is that when we deal with money, which we all do on a daily basis, we are also required to deal with something else. Responsibility. Fear. Guilt. Expectation. Worthiness. Greed. Envy. And, strange as it may seem, we have to face pretty much the same issues *within ourselves* whether we are struggling with too much money or too little.

In my own consultation work I have found that a person's relationship to money is a reliable indicator of their inner state. As we transform on the inside, the flow of money in our life quite naturally transforms as well. The thought-patterns and emotions that have become associated with money throughout a person's life create what I call their *wealth-esteem*. It is, of course, an aspect of self-esteem that just happens to show up very clearly in how we handle our financial affairs.

Transforming Your Wealth-Esteem

Wealth-esteem consists of three primary components. They are the *beliefs*, *emotions* and *behaviours* that have some kind of an association for us with wealth. Collectively they form our financial 'inner reality' which is outwardly reflected in our daily acts of earning, spending, giving and receiving. Whether we pay our bills on time, are saving for a 'rainy day' or are forever in debt no matter how much we earn, our outer life is reflecting what we hold to be true on the inside.

Put simply, we will only allow ourselves to act in ways which are consistent with what we believe to be true at the time. To do otherwise will feel extremely

uncomfortable, and none of us likes to feel uncomfortable for very long. This is a crucial point that many people miss when attempting to transform their financial situation.

Most of us will initially attempt to change things on the outside when we find ourselves in financial difficulty - we work harder, or try to curb our spending, for example. Behaviour modification can certainly help, but it takes a considerable effort to maintain and there is always a tendency to slip back into the old familiar ways.

The second most popular approach is some form of mental-reprogramming, such as positive thinking or the use of affirmations. This too can be helpful, but again we will encounter resistance to changing our old limiting beliefs and, more often than not, we find ourselves reverting to the old ways pretty quickly. Or, even worse, we tell ourselves that we have changed, yet our behaviours and experiences in the outer world tell a different story. This is commonly known as being in denial.

The Role of Emotions

What both of these methods fail to address is the *emotional* component of wealth-esteem, and in my experience it seems to be the most important aspect of all. Suppose, for example, you work as a therapist and charge €40 for a session. But your client is so thrilled with what you did for them that they insist on paying you double! How would that feel to you, and how would you respond?

Depending on your internal reality at the time, there are a number of possibilities. You might be thrilled and accept the gift graciously. Or you might get suspicious and wonder what their ulterior motive must be. You might presume that if they're paying you double you had better work twice as hard in return. Or you might feel that you don't deserve to be paid that much, so you reject the offer, even though you could certainly use the money. And so on.

If you're observant, what you will notice is that the response you generate in a situation like the one above is directly related to your *feeling-state* in that moment. The general principle being, *we limit our responses to the ones that feel more or less comfortable to us*, and will wriggle our way out of any other alternatives - even if that means we end up rejecting something that we would really like to have.

The bottom line seems to be that *our emotions are the glue which binds our beliefs to our behaviours*. If we want to really transform our financial (or any other) situation, we have to uncover and release the *feelings* that arise whenever we start to move outside our existing comfort zone. This is not inherently difficult, but it seems to be the one crucial area that is most frequently neglected.

One of the most useful things I learned about uncomfortable feelings is that they don't mean what we think they mean. Most of us will generate all kinds of reasons as to *why* we are feeling a certain way, but what if you could simply *accept* whatever you are feeling and just let it go? It is, after all, only a sensation passing through your body - how could it possibly mean anything?

Bringing this kind of neutral and compassionate acceptance to uncomfortable feelings (rather than pushing them away or seeking to avoid feeling them) goes a long way towards dissolving the resistance we experience when making a significant internal

change. This creates the necessary space within which *transforming* the belief that is limiting becomes relatively easy.

What we Believe to be True, is True for us (even if its a lie!)

If you confront a person's deeply held beliefs head-on, you'd better watch out! There's no better way to elicit a hostile or aggressive response. The reason is that our core beliefs have become an intrinsic part of our self-identity, and none of us are prepared to give that up without a fight.

The good news is that it is rarely necessary to confront a belief. What seems to work much more effectively is simply to uncover them and to gently question their validity. The way that I usually go about this in my consultation work is by addressing a small number of very specific questions. The one I most often use is along the lines of '*what does that mean to you?*' If you can uncover the meaning that you have attached to something, then you have discovered what you believe to be true in that area of your life.

For example, a person might tell me that they just don't seem able to make ends meet, despite their best efforts. The dialogue might proceed something like this:

The fact that you're unable to make ends meet - what does that mean to you?

It means I'm not working hard enough (belief number one)

And if it were true that you weren't working hard enough, what would that mean to you?

It would mean that I couldn't succeed.... (belief number two)

And if it were true that you couldn't succeed, what would that mean to you?

It would mean that I don't deserve to be successful..... (belief number three)

And if it were true that you don't deserve to be successful, what would that mean to you?

I must be a bad person (belief number four - most likely a core belief)

Within the space of a few minutes, the unconscious (and completely false) associations that this person has held between earning a living and being a good or bad person have been uncovered and brought into conscious awareness. And at each stage of this process, a certain feeling will arise quite naturally which only needs to be accepted and allowed to be felt. In this way, any resistance is quickly dissolved and the person will begin to see for themselves what they believe to be true, and will more than likely have a good laugh at how ludicrous it is! Once you can laugh at your own core beliefs, you're in an excellent position to revise them.

How we relate to money tells us a great deal about our values, our sense of worthiness and the limitations we place on our own freedom. Uncovering these unconscious patterns and transforming them has a liberating and empowering effect not only on our financial situation, but on our whole life.

So how did Warren Buffet manage to dispose of his billions without losing too much sleep over it? With a single act - a masterstroke - he solved his dilemma. Being the second richest man in the world, it occurred to him that there was only one person better qualified than himself to handle that kind of a sum. Enter Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, who, as co- chairman of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, now has Mr. Buffet's billions to get rid of as well as his own. Poor guy!

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