



Meadow DeVor on Breaking Taboos and Paying Off Debt



By **Matt Timms**

When the housing crash hit in 2009, life coach Meadow DeVor was forced to confront uncomfortable truths about her personal relationship with money. Since then, she has drawn on her experience to encourage her clients to talk more candidly about debt, and acknowledge the underlying reasons for their guilt and anxiety around spending.

All about relationships

"A relationship with money is almost like a relationship with a person," DeVor says. "There's a lot of shame and deep-seated self-worth issues. And the more I started looking at that, the more the patterns started to emerge."

Most of us don't realize how many times a day we enter into a relationship with money, DeVor says, so the important thing is to [acknowledge your spending](#) and consider how your mindset can improve. It's the premise of a book she recently wrote called *Money Love: A Guide to Changing the Way You Think About Money*.

"I think one of the reasons why people love the book so much is that it's written in a way that's accessible for people who see themselves as no good with money - with Wall Street, investing, all that. I tried to make it simple because that's how I needed to see it," she says.

A change for the better

Speaking at a financial recovery class recently, DeVor asked her clients which animals best represent money. Almost all replied with something frightening or intimidating. But how, she asked, might it [change your behavior](#) if you saw money as something loving or kind?

"I would say most people understand relationships more than they understand money. If I talk about my relationship with my spouse, we intrinsically understand that we have to be kind, that there's give and take. Wouldn't it be great if we could talk about money this same way, rather than it be this scary, unapproachable thing that we don't understand?"

This attitude is what DeVor teaches on a daily basis: Spending should neither be a crutch nor a burden.

That familiar feeling

DeVor knows the importance of addressing a negative relationship with money management.

It was at the height of the real estate crisis in California when she realized she was saddled with hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. About a third was made up of mortgages on two homes, and although the interest rates were set, she was leveraged beyond what she could afford. This wasn't a problem when the houses were holding their value, but as soon as the crisis hit, the fact that [she owed so much](#) suddenly became very real.

"Debt has a habit of distancing you from the consequences and making it so that you don't realize the implications until years later," DeVor says. She realized that it wasn't a \$500,000 purchase that landed her in trouble; instead, it was the \$20, \$50, and \$100 purchases.

"Originally I started out helping people with debt," she says. "But around 2009, when a lot of people found themselves upside down on their mortgages or overburdened by bad habits, it quickly became apparent that problems show up in all areas of our relationship with money."

The Abundance Scale

DeVor developed the Abundance Scale to help clients assess the importance of a purchase. DeVor encourages clients to rank themselves on a scale of -10 to +10 before buying anything to help determine if the purchase is really necessary. Whether it's groceries for the week or a new handbag, it's important to be mindful about your decisions and how you're feeling at the time, she advises.

By focusing on how we feel when we interact with money, people - by design - become more conscious of potentially damaging habits. Evaluating the feelings behind buying can help people open the door to new, healthier behaviors, DeVor says.

"It's unique because it's not about budgeting and it's not about the dollar amount, it's about how you feel when you buy something, when you don't buy something, when you earn, and when you save," she says. "It puts the emotional relationship between you and money in the center, rather than the numbers."

"Our relationship with money closely mirrors our relationship with life itself," DeVor adds, noting that "helping people change for the better is incredibly fulfilling work."

Over the years, DeVor has witnessed incredible changes in behavior. Irrespective of the dollar amount, the principle remains that the why of our spending decisions is what makes or breaks our relationship with money.

Matt Timms is a journalist based in the London area who writes about a range of business and finance-related topics and specializes in green business and sustainability.

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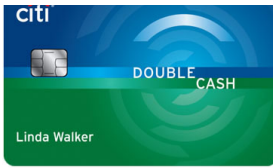


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