

I feel uncomfortable about having money when people in the world are suffering. And I feel bad about having more money than my friends. What should I do?

In my view, money is a store of life energy; it's neither good nor bad, but neutral. Money can perpetuate suffering or create joy. I've advised many people who feel ashamed about having or wanting money. As a result of these (often subconscious) feelings, they make poor investment choices or live beyond their means. These behaviors continue until their savings are diminished and guilt subsides.

It doesn't have to be that way. In her book *Leap! What Do We Do with the Rest of Our Lives?*, Sara Davidson profiles Americans who change their lives, including individuals who take sabbaticals to work with the needy in Africa or use their savings to help others in Latin America. By using their resources to enrich their own lives, these folks are able to enrich the lives of others. And you needn't travel the globe to find opportunities that allow you to do the same.

While you might have more financial wealth than your friends, you don't necessarily have more happiness. Does money bring you joy? Does it bring you closer to your friends? Could it? Creating a healthy relationship with money boils down to how honestly you can look within for guidance and insight. The practice (at right) can help you.

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“Money can help you and help people. But I'm against the idea that having money is the only way to be happy.”

Thich Nhat Hanh



## valuable change

You can do this practice either alone or with friends. First, without thinking too much about it, come up with three ways to complete the phrase, “Money is \_\_\_\_\_.” Now look at your answers, which represent your unconscious beliefs. In general, are you attracting or repelling money (and perhaps freedom, peace, compassion, and creativity as well) with them? Some words that reflect beliefs that attract money might include *valuable, powerful, abundant,*

*supportive, and enjoyable.* My guess is that based on your question (at left), your answers might be more inclined to repel money, perhaps including words like *dangerous, separating, corrupt, anxiety producing,* and *not to be trusted.*

Imagine that you have an abundance of money and visualize all the good you might do with it. List the ways money could serve your ideals. If possible, share your answers with friends and loved ones. This practice transforms money from being something you feel bad about into being an insightful teacher, a powerful agent for equanimity and goodness in your life. B.K.

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