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Between the Issues

Book Review: Conscious Finance

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Conscious Finance claims to help readers uncover their hidden money beliefs and transform the role of money in their lives. Its goal is to "help you establish a healthy, balanced relationship with money." The authors do this in three parts.

"Part I, Interior Finance," describes how dysfunctional money messages affect emotions related to money and create dysfunctional money behaviors. Activities are provided for readers to practice in order to become more self-aware, face painful emotions, and move on to more realistic relationships with money and others who may be affected by money choices.

The final two chapters in Part I encourage readers to live authentically, which means to develop and follow the right course toward one's life goals and aspirations. In order to lay out such a course of action, it is important to tap one's authentic energy source, which the authors believe is more available toward this end once readers are free from dysfunctional money scripts.

"Part II: Exterior Finance" will be more familiar to financial planners. It provides a primer on budgeting (now reframed as a "spending plan"), but adds the importance of including a portion to "feed your soul." Next are discussions on how to manage debt, basic investing principles, and using tax preference packages like IRAs, 401(k)s, and 529 college savings plans to get started.

Finally, protecting possessions was presented to the reader in Part II in the context of estate planning, various types of risk management using insurance products, and the value of different types of business entities (sole proprietor, C and S corporate arrangements, or limited liability setups).

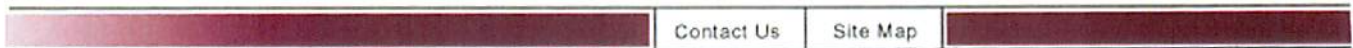
"Part III: Financial Integration" is true to its course. It presents a relaxed, integrated approach to various money situations and people who may be affected. It reminds us that the process begins internally and extends

positively into the world of personal finance and personal relationships to the degree we have come to grips with our own dysfunctional money scripts. The authors emphasize the importance of giving to others and avoiding the potentially bitter costs of money scripts. They provide an excellent summary of the types of advisors from whom to seek advice on the journey; and they include a first-rate list of screening questions.

I would recommend this book for use in workshops geared toward individual self-help and money matters. The authors use their own experiences, mostly of pain and tragedy, and their personal paths to healing to illustrate many of the points. At times I felt a tremendous sadness for them and wished they hadn't taken me along on such a personal journey. Sometimes I felt a bit of a voyeur with no right to these very private thoughts about drug dependence, broken relationships and the death of a loved one.

All in all, it was a story well told by two people who are obviously still struggling, but who are well on the road to authenticity. I believe it is to the authors' credit that they believe others capable of the same success in this extraordinary struggle.

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