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Ebenezer Scrooge offers insights into money behaviors

If the three ghosts from Charles Dickens' classic tale, "A Christmas Carol," were to visit you this Christmas Eve, where would they take you and what would you feel? Would you be transformed like Ebenezer Scrooge, or simply roll over and try to go back to sleep?

It's an interesting question that I asked myself after reading "The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge: 5 Principles to Transform Your Relationship with Money," by Ted Klontz, Rick Kahler and Brad Klontz. The authors, who are practicing professionals in psychology and financial planning, explore the underlying beliefs that drove Scrooge's destructive behaviors and offer hope that change is possible for us, too.

Scrooge's attitudes toward money were formed early in his life, as are yours and mine. These beliefs, which the authors call "money scripts," can either lead us to a life of joy and purpose or misery and drivenness. They operate at a subconscious level and go unnoticed unless they are exposed and steps are taken to alter the destructive ones.

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You won't have to look much beyond your last significant money conversation to find at least one of these powerful scripts lurking: "More money will make things better," "I don't deserve money," "There will never be enough money" or "Money is unimportant." Awareness of these primal attitudes is an important first step, but sometimes outside intervention is necessary for real change to occur.

In Dickens' day, there were no financial therapists, but Scrooge didn't need one, as his three counselors arrived unannounced and uninvited in one night to help him unravel his miserly attitudes toward life and money. The authors explain how each encounter was indispensable in the process of Scrooge's transformation.

For example, after Scrooge's complacency is shaken up by the appearance of Marley's ghost, he is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past. The authors make the point that "the answer to how we can change our most ingrained money scripts often lies in the past," and this is where Scrooge's therapy begins.

"The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge" is not only useful for its insights about Scrooge's experiences, but the authors personalize their book by adding short vignettes of how their own destructive money scripts were changed. None of

them were visited by ghosts, but the stories add authenticity and realism to the themes explored in the book.


Those who want to explore their own money foibles will find the exercises at the end of each chapter helpful. Introducing a few of the questions into conversations with family and friends could lead to

interesting discussions.

If you are looking for an interesting Christmas gift book, The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge would be a good choice. And if your spouse or family members complain because you keep the thermostat too low to save on the winter heating bill, you may want to avoid any unexpected midnight visits from uninvited spirits and read it yourself.

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