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Book Review

Build Your Money Muscles: Nine Simple Exercises for Improving Your Relationship with Money

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Sotkin, J. (2006). *Build Your Money Muscles: Nine Simple Exercises for Improving Your Relationship with Money*. Prosperity Place, Inc. 172 pp., \$24.95, ISBN: 978-0-9741719-8-2.

In her book, *Build Your Money Muscles: Nine Simple Exercises for Improving Your Relationship with Money*, Joan Sotkin outlines a step-by-step process of how to identify, interpret, and repair relationships with money. This book focuses more on the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions (referred to as TBE) around money than actual money management skills. These thoughts, beliefs, and emotions create behaviors which ultimately construct financial situations for better or worse.

Money, by design, represents a medium between two individuals, which in turn creates a defined relationship between the two parties. Hence, financial problems are usually not about money, but about the underlying relationships and emotional bases of those said individuals. Sotkin does a very nice job of laying out the work that the client will have to do in order to change their patterns of behavior, as well as giving numerous relevant examples. The book would be an appropriate supplement to a financial therapist as homework for clients, as it is a very easy read and a great introduction for someone who truly wants to do the work of changing previous financial behaviors. The book is set up in two major sections, with exercises attached at the end of the nine steps. The rest of this review will focus on those sections.

The theory behind *Build Your Money Muscles* is that an individual financial behavior is derived from thoughts, beliefs, and emotions, which creates "Identity Factors" or internal mechanisms that protect an individual's concept of who they are and their place in the world. Changing one's financial position creates great anxiety to the Identify Factor, which will delay decision-making or revert back to previous behaviors to avoid the disruption in

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the current system. This change not only affects the individual, but also peer and family of origin relationships, making it harder to modify behavior. In the first major section, Sotkin focuses on preparation for financial change through the following exercises: 1) *Conditioning Yourself for Change*, 2) *Developing Financial Awareness*, 3) *Identifying Financial Patterns and Underlying Emotional Themes*, and 4) *Setting Attainable Goals*. This first section is designed to identify the individual's current financial behaviors and situations, increase their awareness of the current financial behavior and situation, and to help set realistic goals and objectives for the financial future. Each of these exercises has numerous actions that the individual can complete in order to process through the change. These exercises are very basic and would require minimal explanation or additional resources to assign or complete.

Once the individual has completed the work in the first section, the second section deals with the adaptation of financial behavior and moving towards a new financial identity through the following exercises: 1) *Replacing Unproductive Financial Thoughts*, 2) *Adopting Functional Financial Beliefs*, 3) *Cultivating Healthy Money Feelings*, 4) *Establishing Responsible Financial Behaviors*, and 5) *Improving Your Relationships with Yourself and Others*. Moving forward with a new financial identity requires adaptation of relationships with the individual and others to implement new healthy financial habits. This section is designed to augment behavior in order to solidify healthy boundaries and relationships.

The purpose of this book is not to provide individuals with money management skills, but rather this book provides the foundation for changing money management behaviors. *Build Your Money Muscles* uses the metaphor of physical fitness, which is usually not lost or gained overnight. This book is not for those looking for a quick fix, but it would be very beneficial for those looking to understand and correct long-term problematic financial behaviors.

This book is recommended to planners, counselors, and therapists who have clients that are working through therapy issues in which money plays a supporting role. It is a quick and easy read that can be a good resource for many people, including those who represent a variety of socioeconomic audiences, due to the absence of financial jargon. Since it is easy to understand and interpret, the book would also provide planners, counselors, and therapists a wonderful resource that is equipped with excellent homework exercises for clients so that they can begin to understand and own their relationship with money and recognize how money impacts and complicates other relationships.

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