

What Does Money Stand For?

- Success
- Security
- Status
- Sex Appeal
- Survival
- Satiety

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Powerful Emotions

- Given what money stands for, we are
 - Fearful
 - Envious
 - Greedy
 - Generous
 - Proud
 - Ashamed
 - Jealous
 - Angry
 - In Denial
 - Controlling
 - Anxious
 - Embarrassed
 - Grateful
 - Bewildered, etc.

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A Short History of Money

- Barter
- Invention of a symbol
- Real at first: cows, then precious metals
- Paper
- Increasing abstraction
- Now, electrons at the speed of light
- CDO's, SIV's, CDS's are IED's (Improvised Explosive Devices) as we have learned

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Everyone Is Different

- Moment in history
- Particular family history
- Place and stuff (neighborhood/house/car/room)
- Peer experience
- Religion
- Education
- Neurobiology

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- Both you and each student (and each student's parent) are comprised of these interacting, intersecting variables
- When you meet, variables multiply

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Cost of Education

- Has risen 80% in the ten years between 2003 and 2013
- We are asking families and young people to take an extraordinary amount of risk investing in a young, unproven 'product'
- You are the point at which student and Education Policy touch
- Consider the degree of risk through the lens of social class
- Families less financially stable since Great Recession

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Asymmetry of the Financial Aid Encounter

- You are the expert, student is a beginner
- To the student, YOU are an “N” of 1
- To you, the student is one of thousands
- You have the money and the power
- You appear to be the decider
- Student is the petitioner

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From the student’s perspective (especially the incoming new student):

- You guard the gold
- You have the combination to the safe
- You dispense the gold
- Student needs the gold

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THE STUDENT’S CRISIS

IS

YOUR ROUTINE

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They Call It "Aid"

- First aid, foreign aid, traveller's aid
- The common understanding of the word "Aid" is at odds with the reality of contracts, loans, interest, collections
- Big "award" means big debt
- Language of helping tangled with language of contracts and lending

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Hope, Expectation, Entitlement

- A lot is at stake for student
- Collision!
 - student's hopes meets your facts and policies
 - Epic, once in a lifetime quest meets a bookkeeper, and IRS agent
 - Think Lord of the Rings meets a CPA

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- Each student lands somewhere between a completely free education and an infinitely costly one
- Some students land at another institution because of "your" decision
- You are truly in charge of so little of this drama

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The Business of Disappointing People

- How do you connect with a student humanely?
- How do you defend yourself emotionally?
 - Distance?
 - Judgment?
 - Cynicism?
 - Irritation?

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Know Your Particular Triggers

Entitlement?

Self-pity?

Really sad story?

Anger?

A combination?

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This Is Tough Work

- Easy to fall into supporting each other in negative ways just to release the stress...
 - Become cold, cynical
 - Gossip with colleagues to get understanding, comfort
 - Feel contempt
 - Deride, laugh, use sarcasm

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These Habits Harm You

- You become crude, blunted and discouraged
- You lose nuance
- Your humanity erodes
- Your departmental culture becomes toxic

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You Are Better Than That!

- This is a service job

The essence of this job is
TO HELP PEOPLE

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Financial Aid Team

- It takes a team to understand
- Talk **TO** each other, not **ABOUT** students
- Stay focused on the mission: fair awards and the most opportunity possible for students

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Self Care

- Work that is emotionally hard is **HARD WORK**
 - Get enough sleep
 - Eat right
 - Get some exercise, outside if possible
 - Get face to face social time
 - Use a transitional activity to leave work at work
 - Cultivate a hobby that makes something from beginning to middle to end

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Personal Responsibility

- You are responsible for your stuff
- If there is pain or unresolved conflict within you, work it out or get help
- Hurt people can hurt people

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You Work for the Students

- They are the reason for your job
- They are your customers: the good, the bad and the ugly
- Don't expect students to understand or take care of you

Q-TIP rule

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You Support Each Other

- Have compassion for yourself and each other
- Nobody has a totally complete skillset
 - Help each other compensate for the “bites in the cookie”
- Have compassion for the students

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Sympathy vs. Compassion

- It is not useful to the student and it is not healthful for you to “feel with” the student, to experience their emotions
- Compassion, however, has a wise, and loving quality
 - Keeps you human
 - Keeps student human
 - Keeps the distinction of expertise and experience
- Does not have to be reciprocal

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You Are a Teacher

- Easy to function as just a technician
- Challenge: be an expert without forgetting beginner’s mind
- Enter the world of the student and teach from there
 - The story of money and the story of life
- Build a bridge between what you know and what the student knows

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Content vs. Delivery

- You are not responsible for the content of the rules, the award
- You **are** responsible for the delivery

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Opportunity vs. Outcome

- You deliver opportunity
- Many factors influence outcomes
- Sometimes you are Cassandra
- Just as we have learned from living, so will the students

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Each Encounter...

- You may be the only financial aid person a student ever meets
- Each encounter is potentially transformational
- Even when you have 'bad' news, you have holy work

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Each Encounter...

- When you touch a human life, you touch an infinite mystery
 - Unknown biography, unknown potential, unknown future
 - You were once that student

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In Closing

- Crisis can mean opportunity
- No human encounter has to be routine
- As you return to your daily work, understand it has many openings for mercy and for learning

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