

# Emotional Uses of Money

•Money is powerful. It can bring out the best and worst in people. So, understanding money's influence can help a family gain control over their finances. Insight into emotional uses of money can help a family handle sensitive issues when they arise. Some emotional uses are positive –security, comfort, freedom, sharing, etc. Some can also work against a family –fear, greed, overspending, control, etc.

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Answer the following true-false questions about your use of money. Be honest!

- T      F      I buy things I don't want or need because they are on sale.
- T      F      I feel anxious and defensive when asked about my finances.
- T      F      I can never have enough money saved to feel secure.
- T      F      I buy things I don't need or want because they are "in".
- T      F      I overspend regularly on "extras".
- T      F      I often insist on paying more than my share at a restaurant or on a group gift.
- T      F      I spend money freely, even foolishly, on others, but seldom on myself.
- T      F      I feel "dumb" if I pay more for something than a neighbor did.
- T      F      I don't trust others in my family to spend money wisely.
- T      F      If I earn the money, I think I should have the right to decide how it is spent.
- T      F      If someone in my family acts selfish in spending our money on him/herself, I feel I have the right to do the same.

**Analysis:** If you answered true to any of questions 1-3, you may feel insecure concerning money. Money provides a form of security, but not the only one. What reasons other than money or material possessions might be causing insecurity? Think about it.

•Did you answer *true* to either 4 or 5? Then you may use money for *status*. Money sometimes reflects the values of our friends rather than our own. What are your values?

•*True* answers to question 6,7, or 8 might mean that you use money in ways that reflect your low *self-esteem*. Spending on others does not win the affections of family members, friends, or coworkers. Your spending is your business. It has nothing to do with the spending of your neighbors. You cannot buy *self-esteem*. If yours is low, seek help through reading, therapy, or changes in habits or actions, but not through money.

•If you answered *true* to questions 9 and/ or 10, you may use money to *control* others in the family in two-earner families, his/her money divisions can cause resentment. Not involving family members often results in lack of cooperation. A dictator may secure obedience, but not love. Which do you want from your family?

•A *true* answer to question 11 may indicate that money is used for *retaliation*, to get back at someone. This often causes fairness to become such an issue that it blocks love and affection. If you need to disagree, do so without using money as your weapon.

Adapted from P. Dollar. (1991) Family Communications about Money. University of GA Cooperative Extension.