



# Money: The Shattering of Illusions— Self Image, Health and Money

by Jaqueline Lapa Sussman and Leslie J. Dagnal

*Waterworld painting by Michael Cuimmo*

**W**e are living in times of financial instability, market fall-out, Ponzi schemes and other shocks and catastrophes to our financial security. These uncertain economic conditions have forced many of us to confront our attitudes about money. One of the most basic, primal elements that effect our sense of safety, well-being and self-worth, money functions not only as a medium of commercial exchange, but also as a deep symbol of how we view ourselves and compare ourselves to others. In the wake of this economic tsunami, it's clearly time to reevaluate our attitudes toward money's role in our lives and what this means about ourselves.

A *Forbes* article, "Economic Stress—How Bad Is It Really?," written in April, 2009, disclosed that money-related stress is currently influencing people's health in unprecedented ways. It reported that, due to financial distress, large numbers of peo-

ple are suffering from symptoms such as sleep deprivation, chest and gastrointestinal pain, muscle aches, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, and anxiety. Remarkably, research reveals an increase in suicides and cardiovascular mortality. In the article, Dr. Harvey Brenner, a professor of public health at the University of North Texas Health Science Center and at Johns Hopkins University, went so far as to claim that "major economic disturbances in people's lives makes a real difference in life expectancy."

## **SELF IMAGE AND MONEY**

The leading theoretician of Eidetic Image Psychology, Dr. Akhter Ahsen, has spent over 40 years studying the connection between stressful, traumatic events in people's lives and their immunological responses in the body. Current research-

ers in the field of psychoimmunology have accepted that the body and mind share one continuous flow of chemical and neurological signals. They have researched the link between emotions, thoughts and physiological discharge of chemicals, which profoundly affects our health. Recent developments in psychoimmunology reveal that the negative attitudes we internally harbor toward stressful situations will, in turn, be exerted upon our bodies. Conversely, positive attitudes support our physical well-being.

Since money is such an increasingly potent source of stress in our lives, it's important we begin to examine our mental attitudes and reactions toward the ups and downs of economic turns. Often, these attitudes are patterned by early childhood situations that impact how we respond to present situations.

As a result of the economic fall-out, many of the illusions that base our self-value on money no longer seem valid. Faced with that gap, we're left with feelings of loss, sorrow, worry and deprivation. Where do these negative attitudes come from? More importantly, what is the way to move beyond them into true health?

### **CHEMICALS EXERCISE**

The following exercise, developed by Dr. Ahsen, reveals how internal thoughts, images and feelings deeply influence us on the physical level. It also brings an awareness of how emotional states can actually produce chemical changes within the body. Allow about one minute for each part of the steps.

#### **Relax.**

Remain like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

#### **Now become angry.**

Remain like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemicals states in your body.

#### **Now become happy.**

Remain like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

#### **Now become annoyed.**

Stay like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

#### **Now become pleased.**

Stay like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

#### **Now imagine that you lost or are losing your money.**

Stay like that for a brief time. Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

#### **Now imagine that you have increased your wealth dramatically.**

Stay like that for a brief time.

Notice your bodily feelings and the chemical states in your body.

In each different scenario, it becomes apparent that your body state (your posture and muscular patterns) and your emotional flow of chemicals differed, depending on how your

attitude changed. Whether positive or negative, these differences have profound physical ramifications that influence your health and general well-being.

### **SELF IMAGE AND CHILDHOOD PATTERNS**

Early in our development, our parents' beliefs and behaviors towards money becomes deeply ingrained within us. Whether our parents experienced relative financial ease, or they struggled to make a living, or experienced financial trauma such as bankruptcy, loss of a business, or an illness, profoundly influenced our attitudes about money today.

Our early childhood experiences become stored in our brains as images that live on into adulthood, deeply informing our perspectives about many aspects of our lives. These images are called Eidetic Images, which are potent visual images that have feelings and meanings attached to them. Originally described by the ancient Greeks, and developed through psychological research and practical application by Dr. Akhter Ahsen since the 1960s, they provide significant information about our present day behaviors, our symptoms, and our natural resources and abilities. They also reveal how we have been programmed by all the ongoing circumstances throughout our lives that helped shape our identity.

### **MONEY IMAGE**

Here is an image exercise that will help reveal the origin of your attitudes about money.

When you envision the following images in your mind's eye, you may see them with eyes open or closed. You will see a visual image that may be vague or vivid (either is okay), feel a somatic response (emotion or bodily feeling) and discover a meaning.

1. See your father giving you money as a child. How does he give it to you? Is he pleased, displeased or indifferent? Notice any overt or subtle feelings you have while seeing the image. Is the money freely given or are there strings attached? Allow the meaning to emerge.

2. Now see your mother giving you money as a child. How does she give it to you? Is she pleased, displeased or indifferent? Again notice any overt or subtle feelings you have while seeing the image. Is the money freely given or are there strings attached? Allow the meaning to emerge.

3. See you are taking money from your father as a child. How do you feel taking from him? Do you feel at ease or is there some discomfort?

4. See you are taking money from your mother as a child. How do you feel taking it? Do you feel at ease or is there some discomfort? ➤

5. Do you see any connection between these images and your current states of mind regarding money?

**SELF WORTH AND MONEY:**

For many of us, our self-image is partly based on how much money we have—our sense of prestige and self-importance becomes aggrandized. We can buy bigger houses, more expensive cars, better education for our children, go on lavish vacations and enjoy what life offers in terms of what we can buy. Having money also allows us to make contact with others who have money, so we can have connections that open possibilities to greater success. There is nothing wrong with being successful and having money. However, this can be taken to the extreme.

The question is: How worthy do we feel when our resources are gone? The way we react to the loss of money may leave us feeling powerless. The media fosters wealth as a symbol of worth. The covers of magazines, television shows and other cultural messages bombard us with the notion that affluence is an indicator of self importance.

However, this is a misplaced perspective. Since our illusions have burst regarding how we value our self-identity through money, we must now look at our inner life and to the ideals we may have left behind. For example, we may find a way to share love with one another in a more meaningful way. We can learn to connect to our essence and be fulfilled with that which money cannot buy. Compassion is one of the gifts that can be found when the outer trappings of materialism diminish. When we focus on our internal qualities such as our integrity, love and gratitude, we find the natural chemicals of these states nourish our bodies and minds. It is our spiritual strength that allows us to accept life as it is, whatever the circumstances. We can thus free ourselves from our fears, greed and ego bound desires and, emanate peace, wisdom and a deep empathy for others. This is the lesson that all the world's religions teach. Feel your desire and see an image which allows you to contact that place which is deep within you and leads your spirit into the future. ■

**Jaqueline Lapa Sussman** is a leading author, psychotherapist and lecturer on Eidetic Image Psychology.

For more information on her and eidetic imagery: [www.jaquelinesussman.com](http://www.jaquelinesussman.com)

**Leslie J. Dagnall** is founder of Image Coaching and is a Diplomate of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.

For more information: [www.eidetictraining.com](http://www.eidetictraining.com)

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