



PATH ^{to} Prosperity

How Changing Your Money Mindset
Can Change Your Financial Reality



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MINDSETS, MOTIVATIONS, AND MONSTERS

The trampoline was what had brought Eli and Bryna Linden* to me. That's what Bryna told me on the phone.

There's a first time for everything; I'd never gotten a referral from a trampoline before.

But when I met the Lindens at our first session, I realized this was no laughing matter.

"We've been married for twelve years," Eli began, clenching and unclenching his fists. "I earn good money, and we should be able to live comfortably and even put away savings. But, instead, we're constantly in debt."

Bryna flushed, but she nodded in agreement.

"I try to look away from the extravagant purchases, but the trampoline was the final straw," continued Eli. "I'm all for our kids having a trampoline. But for \$2,500? They're not training for the Olympics!"

Bryna stared intently at the floor as she reached for a tissue.

Eli's voice softened. "I always ask Bryna why, and she doesn't know herself. Why the fancy toys? Why the over-the-top trips? Why the closets full of more clothes than the kids could possibly wear? Why can't she say no?" His voice took on a note of pleading. "Our kids are becoming spoiled monsters."

Creating monsters

There was definitely a monster here, but it wasn't one of their kids. It was a money monster named Greta the Giver.

Naming money monsters is my lighthearted way of helping clients recognize their harmful money behaviors. Greta is a common visitor to my practice. She has

a deep-seated, uncontrollable desire to give to her children, even when it hurts her family and finances. (Note: The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau also uses Money Monsters, but differently. Their website has wonderful resources for children.)

But Bryna wasn't ready to confront Greta yet. She was still sitting across from Eli, looking heartbreakingly hopeless. Bryna didn't want to hurt her children or her *shalom bayis*. She couldn't control her splurges, and she couldn't understand why.

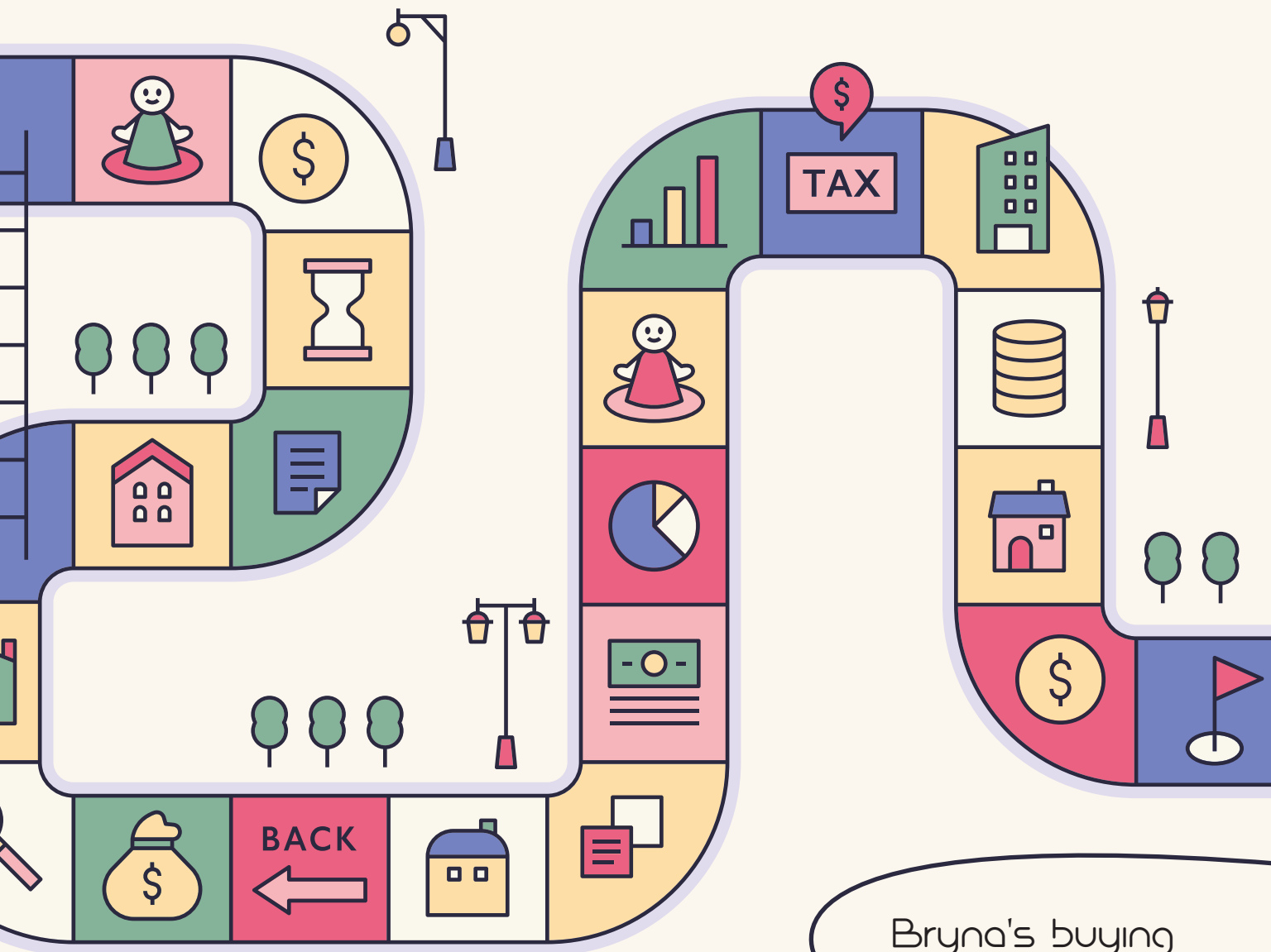
Creating a spending plan was pointless if Bryna wouldn't keep to it. First, we had to help Bryna understand her money mindset, motivations, and, yes, monster. Financial therapy would pave the way for successful money planning.

^ marriage made in financial heaven

Given Bryna's confusing compulsion, IFS-informed financial therapy seemed like the right place to start.

Internal Family SystemsSM (IFS) therapy is based on the theory that every person has an inner family of parts. Sometimes, a part suffers trauma and then uses harmful behaviors to cope with the pain. Through IFS therapy, the person's "self" recognizes the wounded part, releases its burden, and eliminates the need for the destructive behavior.

Recently, Richard Kahler, MS, CFP®, CFT-I™, CIF-SP, CeFT®, a pioneering financial therapist, married IFS concepts with financial therapy and saw excellent results. He used IFS ideas to help clients identify and release their money burdens. Money burdens present as self-destructive financial behaviors like gambling, overspending, compulsive shopping, and hoarding. To quote Kahler: "Every seemingly illogical financial behavior makes perfect sense when we discover the underlying beliefs...that motivate it."



“Bryna, meet Greta”

Gently, Bryna and I uncovered her money story. Bryna grew up in a family that valued *not* having money. Living frugally and doing without were the ideal. But Bryna never felt comfortable with that mindset. She hated not having the same toys or clothes as her friends.

As an adult, Bryna didn’t want her children to ever experience that lack. She overcompensated by splurging on them. In IFS terms, Bryna’s buying part was stuck at nine years old, longing to keep up with her friends. Whenever her kids made a request, her wounded buying part swung into action to protect them from reliving her childhood. No wonder her actions were so illogical—they were dictated by a nine-year-old!

With this recognition, Bryna could face Greta, her Giver Money Monster. She understood Greta’s well-meaning intentions but had the clarity and healing to send her packing.

Path to prosperity

Eli, Bryna, and I created a spending plan to keep Bryna’s adult self in the financial driver’s seat. Then, I introduced the Lindens to our Bucket System.

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The Bucket System is a tangible way to track every spending category, such as groceries, personal care, gas, etc. It's a tried-and-true method for controlling compulsive spending. (See sidebar for details.)

For the Lindens, we included a bucket for each spouse's discretionary spending. This category allowed Bryna to occasionally indulge her compulsions without judgment but within healthy boundaries.

At first, the new system was difficult for Bryna. She learned to be firm with Greta the Giver, explaining kindly that by setting limits, she was giving to their future selves in a healthy way.

The children resisted, too, but soon, they also got used to spending wisely. Now, they're happier and more appreciative and have a leg up on responsible adult financial habits.

Six months later, Bryna and Eli are paying off their debt and investing their savings for long-term financial stability. They're well on their way to prosperity. ●

**Names have been changed.*

Simi Mandelbaum CFT-I, AFC, FBS® is the founder and CEO of PROSPR Financial Wellness. As a certified financial therapist, she reduces money stress by identifying and banishing emotional "money monsters." As a mother and grandmother, Simi is also experienced in eliminating monsters from under the bed and inside the closet.



The Bucket System

The Bucket System divides your monthly income among categories such as groceries, gas, personal care, restaurants, clothing, and medicines. Each month, you can only spend as much as is in a bucket. For example, if the grocery bucket has \$1,500, that's the monthly grocery limit.

When the bucket is empty, you're done spending in that category for the month. No "borrowing" from other buckets. No advances from the bank.

Back in the day, the Bucket System was called the Cash Envelope System. People labeled actual envelopes and filled them with cash. Today, we track the money electronically. Our PROSPR Plan™ software can manage up to 10 buckets per client. The funds may all be in one bank account, but the software displays each bucket separately.

You can make your own Bucket System by opening a fee-free checking account for each budget category. Every month, divide your paycheck among the accounts. You use a dedicated debit (not credit!) card for each bucket when you shop.

Whichever way you use it, the Bucket System is an important accountability tool for couples committed to gaining prosperity.

A free email newsletter
by Eli Fried

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