

## THE BIG IDEAS

**The Wanting Mind**  
You'll never have enough.

**Heartfelt Goals**  
The antidote.

**Core Story**  
What's yours?

**No Quick Fixes**  
Slow down. Think mastery.

**Archetypes**  
What's driving your show?

**Holding Both**  
Walk the Middle Way.

**Invest**  
How're your clothes?

**Investing as Though**  
We're all one.

**I, Me, My**  
& Heart attacks.

**The Yoga of Money**  
GIVE!!!



# It's Not About the Money

Unlock Your Money Type to Achieve Spiritual and Financial Abundance

BY BRENT KESSEL · HARPERONE © 2008 · 308 PAGES

“Don't get me wrong. I am by no means saying that you can't be both wealthy and happy. But whether you have a seven-figure trust fund or a pile of unpaid bills on your kitchen table, the path to freedom requires that you focus more on your inner life than on your outer financial circumstances.”

~ Brent Kessel from *It's Not About the Money*

If you, like me, have struggled with integrating your spirituality with your economics, your self-awareness with your bank balance, and all the rest of the challenges that go with showing up consciously around money in our often frenetic lives, [Brent Kessel](#), “financial planner by day, yogi by dawn,” is your friend. And, his book, [It's Not About the Money](#), is a great-read.

[It's Not About the Money](#) is all about pointing us to the spiritual path within our relationship to money—helping us master this part of our life to help us live in integrity with our highest ideals. As Brent wrote the book, he traveled around the world, interviewing such spiritual and investment luminaries as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), Rabbi Harold Kushner, David Whyte, Nobel Prize winner Dr. Harry Markowitz, Vanguard Funds founder John Bogle, Ram Dass, and Joseph Goldstein. (You'll find many of their quotes in the sidebar throughout this *Note*.)

It's a remarkably transformative book—the myriad of exercises Brent shares brought me to tears several times—as I re-lived powerful episodes around money from my childhood and witnessed how these experiences have affected me throughout my adult life. AND how I can now use this awareness to better understand my financial archetypes and create a more conscious life around money. Powerful stuff.

If you're feeling it, get the book to dive deeply into Brent's brilliant process of discovering your Core Story that's running your show and which of his eight archetypes show up in your life—from “The Guardian,” “The Pleasure Seeker,” “The Idealist,” and “The Saver” to “The Star,” “The Innocent,” “The Caretaker,” and “The Empire Builder.”

It's quite remarkable to see which of these archetypes shows up when and how. And, as I said, what you can do about it. So, let's sit down in quiet meditation as we explore some of Brent's many Big Ideas and see just what the yogi/financial planner has to say about achieving spiritual and financial abundance!

## THE WANTING MIND

“The Wanting Mind insists that things need to change in order for us to be happy, and money is one of its favorite objects to focus on.”

The Wanting Mind.

You know, that part of you that *always* wants just a *little bit* more. Brent perfectly captures this tendency in a quote from John D. Rockefeller who, when asked how much is enough, replied: “*Just a little bit more.*”

“*Though outer wealth rarely leads to inner wealth, inner wealth often does lead to outer wealth.*”

~ Brent Kessel

*"Wealth is not his who has it, but his that enjoys it."*  
~ Benjamin Franklin

How about you? Can you feel the unending desires for more? A grasping for the next object of your desire coupled with a (false) sense of finally being happy once ... you ... get ... that ... next ... thing ???! *Always* grasping... Never quite content with what is.

As Brent advises: "I am not saying that it is wrong to have these desires. But can you see how each of these thoughts, with its underlying foundation in 'not enough,' actually undermines our life right now, just as it is? Every single one of these thoughts presumes that we'd be happier or more secure if something were to change. And there would be no problem with this strategy... if we actually ended up happier after fulfilling our wants. But we don't. We usually just end up wanting more."

How does this show up in our financial lives? Just take a quick look at the massive debt and non-existent savings of the average American household—seemingly incapable of controlling the Wanting Mind's desperate need for immediate gratification. So how do we address this challenge of the Wanting Mind? We need to create some:

## HEARTFELT GOALS

*"There is never enough in the world to satisfy the dissatisfied heart."*

~ Christina Feldman,  
meditation teacher

"By understanding the differences between the Wanting Mind's desires and your more heartfelt goals, you will have a much greater likelihood of making progress toward a life that will gratify you in a more sustaining way."

Wanting Mind's Desires vs. Heartfelt Goals. Brent offers some REALLY powerful distinctions. Whereas our Wanting Mind's Desires are characterized by a predominant concern of how we'll benefit, are sought after with childlike urgency, and competitive, our Heartfelt Goals serve something bigger than ourselves, are characterized by patience, are intrinsically motivated and are part of a deeper sense of meaning in our lives.

Brent walks us through a great exercise to differentiate between our Wanting Mind's Desires and our Heartfelt Goals. You can get a quick taste of it by creating a list of your dreams and goals now and then take a look at how many of them look like your Wanting Mind vs. your Heartfelt Goals based on the descriptors above. As Brent says, "...there's nothing inherently wrong with the desires of the Wanting Mind—it's just that we are doomed to disappointment when we think they'll bring any kind of lasting fulfillment." For that, we need to discover and live our heartfelt goals...

*"Fear about money is, at its root, the fear of not surviving."*

~ Brent Kessel

Alright. So now we've taken a quick look at the Wanting Mind and the importance of Heartfelt Goals. That's Chapter 1 in a (very small) nutshell. Next up: Understand that "The Unconscious Wins Every Time." (That's Chapter 2. :) ... And, to understand the truth of that statement, we've gotta understand our:

## CORE STORY

"Until you can identify and examine your Core Story, your outer financial life will be a mirror of your unconscious expectations. It is only when you understand what your unconscious mind believes about your financial lot in life, and what it believes is going to make you happy or safe, that you have a chance to change the tale you're constantly replaying in your head."

Amen. THIS is the dominant theme of the book. Our Core story is running the show.

And, it's buried beneath layers and layers of habits we've unconsciously created to deal with the script we've written for our life.

As Brent says, "A Four-Year-Old Runs Your Financial Life." He suggests we think about how Jeru Kabbal describes our subconscious mind in *Finding Clarity*: "An iceberg floats with about nine-tenths of itself beneath the surface of the water, while only one-tenth shows above water. If we compare this to the mind, we could say that nine-tenths of the mind below the surface is the subconscious, and the part above the surface is the conscious mind... [S]uppose that our

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~ Brent Kessel

*"We form our Core Story, whatever its content, with the unconscious hope that if we follow it, we'll be protected from feeling difficult or painful emotions."*

~ Brent Kessel

*"Now that all your worry has proved such an unlucrative business, why not find a better job?"*

~ Hafez

*"Ninety-nine percent of people will die having not examined their conditioning and beliefs in a meaningful way."*

~ Brent Kessel

*"The biggest pitfall as you make your way through your life is impatience."*

~ Susan Jeffers

'iceberg' is somewhere in the North Atlantic. The part that is below the water is considering floating up to the North pole for a vacation. At the same time, the part that is above the water is thinking of floating down to Sicily for a vacation there. Where do you think the iceberg will actually go for its vacation? Obviously, it's going to go where the bigger part—the unknown part, the unseen part—wants to go. That's where the power lies."

Throughout the book, Brent provides powerful exercises to help us cast some light on how our unconscious Core Story has been running the show. And, in the light of our awareness, he gives us the tools to start consciously writing a new script—a script consistent with our highest ideals and no longer driven by our unexamined Core Stories.

Powerful stuff. A few of the many questions Brent poses to kick off the process of better understanding our Core Story:

- "What is your most painful memory related to money? ..."
- "What is your biggest fear about money? ..."
- "What were you taught was important about money? ..."
- "When have you been most positively or negatively moved by money?"

As we gain a deeper understanding of how our conditioning is affecting our current behavior, Brent points out that the trick is to "identify and retain the healthiest parts of our story's message, while at the same time letting go of the extreme and unhealthy behaviors and attitude it has engendered in us."

You can learn more about your Core Story by engaging in the plethora of exercises in the book and by checking out BrentKessel.com where you can listen to an audio-guided self-inquiry that will help you gain a deeper understanding of your Core Story. And, as we embark on the journey of discovering our financial selves, remember, there are:

## NO QUICK FIXES

"Just like yoga, prayer, meditation, physical exercise, intellectual learning, or watering seeds of love in a marriage, cultivating financial awareness is a lifelong practice that can yield incredible results."

Ahhhh... The refreshing truth that there are NO quick fixes.

Yes, I'm a big fan of the *idea* that we can change our life in a weekend, but, as we both know, that's not how it works. As we dig into the challenging areas of our lives (whether it's our financial Core Story or relationship or health issues), it's ALWAYS a good idea to keep the wisdom of patience and diligence and the long-term pursuit of mastery in mind, eh?

How about some more wisdom on that subject?

My favorite from [Epictetus](#), the Roman Stoic philosopher who tells us: "No great thing is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig, I answer that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen."

Or, how about Leonardo da Vinci: "He who wishes to be rich in a day will be hanged in a year."

So, with a patient heart and mind, let's take a quick peak at the archetypes Brent has created that address some of the common patterns we fall into in our financial lives.

## ARCHETYPES

"Archetypes can be thought of as energies within us. They are not personal but more like collective patterns that are manifested within us and recognizable in others. The value of

*"We get what we think we deserve."*

~ Brent Kessel

defining these archetypes is that they give us a basis for understanding how we got the financial life we have today, as well as a plethora of tools with which to create the financial life we most want."

Archetypes are our keys to unlocking our Core Story.

Here's a quick snapshot of the eight archetypes Brent's developed and how they show up positively and negatively in our lives:

- **The Guardian** is always alert and careful.
- **The Pleasure Seeker** prioritizes pleasure and enjoyment in the here and now.
- **The Idealist** places the greatest value on creativity, compassion, social justice, or spiritual growth.
- **The Saver** seeks security and abundance by accumulating more financial assets.
- **The Star** spends, invests, or gives money away to be recognized, feel hip or classy, and increase self-esteem.
- **The Innocent** avoids putting significant attention on money and believes or hopes that life will work out for the best.
- **The Caretaker** gives and lends money to express compassion and generosity.
- **The Empire Builder** thrives on power and innovation to create something of enduring value.

*"When there's too much stress or too much worry, look inward! Read more. Think. Trying to find the answer from outside yourself is nonsense! Think more."*

~ Brent Kessel

As you look at the characteristics of each archetype and start to see flashes of yourself in some, remember Brent's wisdom: "In my opinion, the optimal human being would be balanced among all eight of these archetypes. Who wouldn't want to be the person whose financial life was experienced as secure and abundant, pleasure-filled and joyous, powerful and creative, self-sufficient, significant and worthy, relaxed, generous, and compassionate?"

Again, in the short space we have here, it's impossible for me to go into detail on each of these archetypes (of course, get the book if this is resonating with you!).

For now, know this: "Identifying the archetypes that are most active within us is an important step toward creating true financial freedom. By bringing conscious awareness to what is unconscious, we can attain balance and a sense of control over our financial destiny."

And, that's exactly what chapters 3-10 are all about. One chapter per archetype with stories and exercises to help us understand which archetype shows up when and which one (or two or three) have proven to be dominant. AND, of course, what we can do about it with our new-found awareness...

From there, the final chapters include: "The Middle Way with Money," "The Conscious Investor," and "The Yoga of Money." Here are a few of my favorite Big Ideas from those chapters:

## HOLDING BOTH

"No matter how profound your wise insights seem, you can't believe or fully trust what you know until you blend it with your primitive conditioning. The key is to live with both perspectives—the unconscious Core Story and your innate financial wisdom—for some time. Again, this is not easy and requires great intentionality. Keep reminding yourself of this. As you repeatedly practice allowing your innate wisdom and primitive conditioning to exist together, true change will occur."

The Middle Way.

Brent provides an awesome exercise to "Hold Both" the conditioned Core Story's reflexive response to money challenges and our evolving "inner elder"—that part of us that is "most wise

*"One goal is material fulfillment, and the means for that is the creation of wealth, which today would include the accumulation of the most powerful US dollar. The second goal is the attainment of liberation, and the means for that is spiritual practice."*

~ His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*" Say what you will about a market economy, but one of the bonuses of such a system is that it gives us the opportunity to benefit both other human beings and ourselves."*

~ Brent Kessel

*" The returns among all active managers engaged in picking large stocks is no better than if they were flipping coins to help them make their selections."*

~ Brent Kessel

*" Love, compassion, forgiveness, and contentment are at the core of every major religion."*

~ Brent Kessel

and divine within." As Brent advises, it's critical that we not completely reject our conditioned self as it has, and continues to play a valuable role in our lives. The trick, as always, is to bring consciousness to this part of our life and to find the Middle Way.

## INVESTING AS THOUGH WE'RE ALL ONE

First: did you know that: "The word *invest* comes from the Latin *investire*, meaning 'to clothe in.' The meaning, 'to use money to produce profit,' expresses the notion of giving one's capital new form, or 'clothing.'"

Isn't that cool? Brent suggests we think of money we have earned as representative of our life energy—and points out: "At its best, investing is about being an active, contributing member of the human race. It is about providing our capital to other human beings so that they can live more productive lives."

Beautiful.

How about you? How are *you* investing your life's energy?

Keep in mind that: "Every major spiritual tradition states that we are all one. And the style of investing this chapter describes is a very practical application of that lesson."

Brent devotes a chapter in which he expresses his mojo as the leader of one of the top 250 wealth management firms in the country (according to *Bloomberg*) as well as his compassionate vision as a devoted yogi to share the big picture of conscious investing. Here are a few quick highlights:

- First, follow the wisdom of John Bogle, founder of Vanguard Funds: "The reality is you don't need to understand any of the complex aspects of the stock market. You don't need to own stocks. You need to own the stock market."
- And, understand that true diversification is all about "asset-class diversification"—in simple terms, putting your money into investments that move in different directions at different times." :)
- Brent talks about not letting your emotions run the show with your investing and cites the Dalbar study which showed that the typical US investor in mutual funds from 1987-2006 grew \$10,000 to \$23,252, while a \$10,000 investment in the S&P500 would've grown to \$93,050 in the same time. As he says, that's a pretty big cost to people letting their emotions run their money!
- Finally, how much do you pay your advisor? Brent STRONGLY recommends fee-only structures and reminds us that "a 1 percent increase in costs could require you to work an extra five years before retiring, or to send your child to a college that costs half as much as the one you could afford had you reduced your investment costs sooner."

## I, ME, MY & HEART ATTACKS

This is astounding: "The irony is that the more self-centered we are, the less likely we are to survive. A medical study of more than three thousand individuals over seven years measured the frequency with which each person spoke the words I, me, and my, to see if there was any correlation between this self-referencing and coronary heart disease. Amazingly, they found that self-referencing was indeed related to the incidence of heart disease; in fact, it was the strongest predictor of mortality among heart attack victims."

Wow.

How about *you*? Are you living with a generous heart?

As Piero Ferrucci, a transpersonal psychologist, says: "The most sensible way to look after our own self-interest, to find freedom and be happy, is not to directly pursue these things but



"Let us more and more insist on raising funds of love, of kindness, of understanding, of peace. Money will come if we seek first the kingdom of God—the rest will be given."

~ Mother Teresa

to give priority to the interest of others. Help others to become free of their fear and pain. Contribute to their happiness. It's all really very simple. You don't have to choose being kind to yourself and others it's one and the same."

Joseph Goldstein, co-founder of Insight Meditation Society: "Generosity breeds an immediate kind of happiness, which is different than other practices, which often have a delayed positive reinforcement. This helps generosity beget more generosity with less and less effort." And, from Brent: "It's as though the laws of the universe bend for love. Financial laws bend. Temporal laws bend. Logistical constraints bend. By giving, we might just end up having more."

## THE YOGA OF MONEY

"Money is a store of life energy, and when we can channel that life energy into an expression of what is most dear to our soul, an exciting alignment takes place between our financial and spiritual lives."

If you're as passionate about integrating your spirituality and economics as I am, it's always a good sign when an author wraps up his book with: "We are free when we move from a focus on getting love, abundance, peace and freedom to *being* love, abundance, peace, and freedom."

Although we've covered a fair amount of ground on the oodles of Big Ideas in this great book, we've still just barely scratched the surface.

Hope you enjoyed and may we BE love, abundance, peace and freedom in our lives today,

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
Chief Philosopher

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## About the Author of "It's Not About the Money"

BRENT KESSEL



Brent Kessel was named one of the top 250 financial advisors in the U.S. by *Worth* magazine and his company, Abacus Wealth Partners, which manages more than \$800 million in client assets, was named one of the "top 250 wealth management firms in the U.S." by Bloomberg's Wealth Manager. Dubbed a "Financial Soul Searcher" by *Research magazine*, Kessel has been featured in *Newsweek* and *Yoga Journal*, and has been widely quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. After meeting the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa as a young man, Kessel began practicing yoga and meditation and skyrocketed to success in a career that uniquely combines spirituality and wealth management. (from HarperCollins.com) Learn more at [BrentKessel.com](http://BrentKessel.com).

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).