

Intro ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to Real Money Real Experts, a podcast where leading financial counseling and coaching experts share their stories, their challenges, and their advice for helping people manage money in the real world. I'm your host, Rachel DeLeon, executive Director of the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education for A-F-C-P-E. And I'm your co-host, Dr. Mary Bell Carlson, an accredited financial counselor or AFC and the President of Financial Behavior Keynote Group. Every episode we're taking a deep dive in the topics that personal finance professionals care about, helping clients, building community, and your professional growth. The opinions of our podcast guests are their own, which means that their stories, views, or lived experiences may differ from yours or mine. However, the one thing you will always find on this show is a common thread. Our guests are passionate about helping people with their money to improve their lives, and they believe in upholding high standards for the clients and the communities that they serve. We encourage you to tune in to real money, real experts with open curiosity. Why? Because it's oftentimes in the conversations where viewpoints or stories differ from our own that we learn the most. Brent Neiser is the host and CEO of What's Next with Money, a free YouTube program on personal finance, future trends and consumer issues. Previously, Brent was the senior director for the Denver based National Endowment for Financial Education, where he created national programs on personal finance for the American public, including over a hundred partnerships with groups like National Council and Problem Gambling, Sesame Workshop and Habitat for Humanity. Brent has worked with the White House executive agencies and testified before Congress on financial empowerment issues. He was also appointed for three terms to the consumer financial Protection Bureau's consumer advisory board, serving as the chair in 2020. He currently has one client, his own families and the charities that they support, plus his YouTube audience who all learn for free in his free time. Brent plays drums and Latin percussion, paddleboards Snowboards does yoga, swims and loves modern design. He and his wife, Marian, a former nonprofit executive, adopted three special needs children from the foster care system who are now working adults. Welcome, Brent.

Brent Neiser ([02:38](#)):

Well, thank you Rachel and Mary. Great to be with you.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([02:40](#)):

Thank you. Hey, Brent, we've known you for a while and you have a really rich background in financial literacy and community policy. In our intro, we had mentioned you worked with both NEFE and the CFPB, but you also worked for the Financial Planning Foundation as well. Tell us how you came interested in personal finance in the first place.

Brent Neiser ([03:00](#)):

Well, it's a fun journey. In high school, I thought I'd be a social worker. I really cared about values and other people, and then through some activities and I found government, I found policy and I felt that's a bigger stage to impact the lives of others and to be creative really for society. Went to college in Washington DC and then thought I'd be a lawyer, but I got a fellowship with a CHO foundation that CORO. There happened to be four senators that are graduates of that program in Con in Congress right now. And that turned me on to business and corporate public affairs, the interplay of business, labor, media, government, politics, community organizations and nonprofits, society. I had years training through real live experience, including some time at the Walt Disney Corporation, Walt Disney Imagineering on Epcot. So hey, I dropped the lawyer Goal

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([04:04](#)):

<laugh> and

Brent Neiser ([04:05](#)):

Uh, I went for an MBA and I was always a saver and an investor came late to home ownership, kind of on purpose, but I'm in a finance class and MBA and the finance teacher gave a personal finance example of something and I almost leapt out of my seat. I almost hit the ceiling <laugh> because I thought that's another way to look at this. And I thought, this is so interesting because I already was an investor. So I then went on a journey to find what may have been financial planning. I didn't know what it was. I actually heard of some groups. I interviewed planner organization in Atlanta, one in uh, in Denver. And eventually the Denver folks hired me. It was a fee only firm focused on middle income Americans and that, you know, that kind of social worker background, that was where my heart was. So that kind of entered me, and then I can tell you a little more of what happened after that into the organizations.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([05:06](#)):

Well keep going.

Brent Neiser ([05:08](#)):

Okay, well, I'm in Denver and I'm working for this fee only firm, and I sign up to volunteer for the Denver based, and Denver is kind of the home. At one time, it was home of five different organizations around financial planning. The Denver based Institute of Certified Financial Planners, the College of Financial Planning was here, and I still live in the Denver area. They, and that later the Institute of Certified Financial Planners became the FPA. And I know Mary, you worked for them in in great super capacity. So I volunteer. I said, I have a background in government affairs. I had and previously worked for a state legislature. And ironically, one of the assignments they gave me in policy was to deal with occupational license. License was to deal with occupational licensing. And I thought, oh, how boring. I don't wanna do this. It turned out that was the exact background I needed to help this emerging profession and this emerging certification. So I knew how this played out on state level, federal, and even the emerging reforms of occupational licensing that are still with us to drop barriers for low and moderate income Americans to move into other professions. So with that background in occupational licensing and the reforms that were being talked about on the state and federal level there in a think tanks, it was perfect. Well, I still wanted to volunteer for the, was then be the FPA eventually in the government affairs area. They never got back to me. I called 'em, I said, come on, I free labor. I've got state and federal background ready to go for you and I'm A CFP because I did go for that training. And they said, well, we think we're gonna, we're gonna hire you. We don't want you to volunteer. And I became their first government affairs director and then a few years later became executive director. And then from that I transitioned to financial education at the National Endowment for Financial Education, NiFi. But there was a real transition and inflection point there. Several of us and the staff and the board at the Institute of Certified Financial Planners created a personal economic summit. We, we brought the issue of financial literacy and the role CFPs could play in society. They have a unique background in things they can offer in the public space through appointed boards, maybe running for office, but certainly as thought leaders. And guess who got on CNN from that, our, our mutual friend, Dr. Barb O'Neill. Oh

Rachael DeLeon ([07:45](#)):

Yeah.

Brent Neiser ([07:45](#)):

Um, made a huge statement about financial literacy to the world audience and CNN picked up her soundbite and believe me, that started really a movement toward pro bono toward financial literacy. It got the college engaged. They rebranded themselves as nefe, the National Endowment for Financial Education from just the College for Financial Planning. And they took on, eventually they morphed into a private operating foundation to deal with financial empowerment. They had their high school program that I ended up overseeing collaborative programs, a lot of engagement with the media and we really helped financial planning take off in the public sector, but also also the financial literacy movement and financial planners and credited financial counselors became allies in that effort.

Rachael DeLeon ([08:39](#)):

Brent, was that the first time hearing Barb O'Neill speak in that capacity and your work at nefe? Is that when your paths crossed with A-F-C-P-E?

Brent Neiser ([08:48](#)):

No, my A-F-C-P-E journey was much earlier and its origins were really, when I went for the CFP designation, it was great, but my focus was on the middle and lower income sector and CFP was wonderful, but it didn't have really a lot on credit or budgeting or the kind of the basics of middle America. So I saw really what a FC was and I didn't know what, and it probably didn't exist at that time, but I went through a program that was Faith-based, that was sort of the precursor of Crown Ministries and to pick up that kind of knowledge, I was doing seminars back in Kentucky where I lived and then also in Colorado where I moved for the fee only planning firm in churches and just really trying to help people out. But I needed that, that was missing. And then working at the, I'll just call it FP, you know, the precursor to the FPA in Denver, I would go to A-F-C-P-E meetings. In fact, I didn't even know how to say A-F-C-P-E. Well, so I called it the Tahira Hero Group, <laugh>. It was one of our great, you know, I guess your first executive director and then A FCP community became my early warning system and, and sort of like the Gallup organization of what's happening with middle and lower income Americans. I would go and I knew Barbara through that well, before we invited her to the personal economic summit. This is where I picked up the issue of problem gambling and so many other, you know, rubber meets the road kind of kitchen table issues, but also these things that can just throw a family just outta whack. And they became a FC PE conferences seeded, and their research seeded me with the many ideas for these collaborative initiatives I did with NiFi. And I'm still working in the problem gambling space. In fact, they hire me sometimes to go around and talk. I have one of my, uh, 96 videos on the What's Next with money YouTube channel is on problem gambling and it's a very in-depth looking and it, and it's built on along prior work with NFI research, actually Dr. Tahira did at Iowa State and all the great things. So for me, A FCP, its beau beautiful confluence of research practice the military. And, and now you guys are more into policy. You're thinking about equity issues, activism, and this is kind of, you know, it just resonates with me. And then eventually your staff said, why aren't you A A FC? And I thought, I don't know <laugh>. And so <laugh> in 2017, I went for the designation, I took the test. And I've gotta also say, 'cause I know a lot about certification, the occupational professional space licensing regulation, you all and the CFP board take this so seriously. I mean, you're one of the few organizations that accredit the accreditation. You do. I mean, it's that you talk about standards, it's the ultimate expression of that standard making. And then I've gotta say, you, you all need to send me some calming down pills sometimes because two or three times a week I drive right by my testing center and I just refe the anxiety of the three hour test and the dimm, you know, fluorescent lighting above. You know, it just gives me a whole creepy feeling.

Rachael DeLeon ([12:35](#)):

You need to tweak that and that should become like, that fe that glowing feeling of pride every time you drive by. Okay,

Brent Neiser ([12:40](#)):

I've gotta, yeah, I've gotta flip

Rachael DeLeon ([12:42](#)):

That, reframe it. That's right. And

Brent Neiser ([12:44](#)):

It ties into my first video. That's still one of our more popular ones on financial insomnia. So I think if I, that's a financial insomnia video, I'll chill

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([12:55](#)):

Out. Hey brand, it is amazing how many things you've done and how many paths over the last several decades that you've just created. I'm just always amazed. And I learned every time I listen to your story, I learned something else you did that I didn't know about. It's just incredible <laugh>,

Brent Neiser ([13:12](#)):

I found somebody that labeled my breadth of interest because I call myself like Mr. Horizontal and that's a book by David Epstein called Range. And it's really kind of the rise of the generalist and so many people in the tech industry, and even I think in public life they have some specialties, but they keep broadening out. All my master's degrees are in different subjects. If I go to A FCP, I'm hanging around all these PhDs and as John Hope Bryant, you know, says, you know, you gotta be a PhD, not just a PhD. But I will probably never go into that vertical deep dive into one area because the breadth is what really excites me and drives me and it's kind of how I'm wired. And A-F-C-P-E, uh, helps feed that.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([14:00](#)):

Well I wanna dig into one interesting aspect and that is you work for the CFPB. And let me make sure I'm saying that it is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. I want to hear about what you took away from that work during your time as chair of the CFPB advisory board.

Brent Neiser ([14:18](#)):

It was an honor to do this, to get that appointment and then actually to be, I'm kind of one of these unusual people that was reappointed three times. Oh wow. Just because there was a little bit of political upheaval. It was 2017 through 2020. We had different directors, different political issues going on. And as chair, you know, we worked with in many ways, but what happened when I was chair is covid hit. And so we spent a lot of time, and I did, I did chair over a live in-person meeting, and then we had to kind of go virtual, but we really worked with the CFPB to become, to have, and I, this is another thing from the A-F-C-P-E, you know, the disaster issues in personal finance and nefe, one of the first projects we did, and it's still going disaster education and personal finance prep and recovery.

Brent Neiser ([15:16](#)):

So I had that background. I said, we've gotta have a coordinated response and I really encourage the CFPB especially on housing 'cause you're dealing with loan extensions, forbearance, debt relief, moratoriums on evictions and foreclosures. But, and there were all these little rules and all the recovery acts that were just done so fast. And I said, you've guys got to get this on video. You have to talk and show, you have to show what's happening. And the CFPB became the housing hub for the coordinated response and kind of the information with, with HUD and some of the other federal regulators, including the F-D-I-C-F-T-C, et cetera. So that was good. We also had a big focus on savings the consumer. I deal with future trends a lot on the what's next with Money YouTube channel. And we have big emphasis, the CFPB is uniquely positioned with its consumer complaint database. It's like another early warning system, kind of litmus paper for what's going on. And to me, uh, Elizabeth Warren called the CFPB, the first federal agency of the 21st century, and they are a learning organization. They were like a startup. So they do think fast and they're nimble and they, they kind of take inspiration from the, the tech community about iterating, which, and we did a lot of FinTech work with them. I chaired a committee on, uh, trusting mobile financial services needs barrier barriers and learning opportunities. So we, we've probed a lot of that. But that consumer complaint database is the way we're hearing from consumers of where new problems are. And this is exactly what the A-F-C-P-E community has been for me. You have been for CFPB was created, you would bring to the community, we're hearing this, here's something we're starting to study. I've got a grant on this. I've written a journal article on that or, and then you, like, I try to do, you fuse those, those things. I've got a certificate in Homeland Security and you know what, what do you need to do? You have to have fusion centers to bring in all this intel, these little indicators, these trends, these signals of intelligence. You do that. They did that. And what I tried to do is make sure that federal agency embrace that, that that beautiful portal, but then fed the indicators into their systems. And also I think it would be one, if the federal government works better and it should, they need to feed that out to the other agencies.

Rachael DeLeon ([18:06](#)):

Brent, you talk a lot about the way A-F-C-P-E has fed information to you, but now I think you're also continuing to do that with your YouTube channel to consumers taking that breadth of knowledge, those money ideas and trends and feeding that outward. And so talk to us a little bit about what's next with money and what your vision is there and what you've been working on. Well,

Brent Neiser ([18:27](#)):

Rachel, that's a great question and it really hit it. It is a way of, I didn't design it to give back, but I decided, designed it to be able to talk, to actually be able to have it as a platform working for the FS PA predecessor working for nefi. I did a lot of media, but you need to stay within the confines of that organization, which was great. But now I can basically explode my ideas upon all humanity <laugh> through what's next with Money YouTube channel. And let me just mention a few of these categories playlists. So I've got 96 videos, 16 of those are shorts, so they're one minute in length. I just recorded ten two days prior to the taping of this podcast. And so I have 20, they're, they're recorded, but they're not edit. I hire a professional editor to help me. And folks, if you are curious about the channel, say what's this guy doing? You know, for fun, because they like modern design, you've gotta check out my set because every video has different props, and the props often mean something. They, they feed into the theme and I think you'll like that. But here are the, I have now nine playlists, which it helps you like index, like a library, big one, closing Wealth Gaps. This is back to the heart of being an interested, like a social worker, closing the wealth gap in housing retirement for children and even one on what I call Secrets of wealth building, but it's about time poverty, kind of the gap in people's ability to have time to

even do things, especially about money. Another one is the future of money and have Bitcoin. Uh, blockchain will cash go extinct, but my favorite is the one on Star Trek, <laugh>, star Trek and

Rachael DeLeon ([20:27](#)):

Money.

Brent Neiser ([20:28](#)):

And, and I have like three big things I'd go deep into. It's only like an eight minute video, but it's like live long and prosper. Humans are highly illogical. Uh, you can't mess with a prime directive, which is non interference, which I relate to messing with markets and doing stupid things with money, you know, that are not in your long-term interest. Another one is get financially organized and actually our biggest hit about financial organization is in there organizing your vital documents and financial records. We have one on digital assets money map. We're getting a hundred views every three days on our vital documents and financial records video. Um, so that's an, this is stuff I use and live. In fact, Dr. Bill Anthes who ran Nefe and really helped create it from the former president of the college for financial planning, when we did our first Red Cross collaborative work, he came to me one time and he says, do you really do this stuff that's in the, in the, in your pamphlets and on the website? And I said, yes, <laugh>, I actually do. So I try to follow this and, you know, wall Street Journal interview on disasters, we got into it in such in depth. We did a second day of the interview on a Saturday with a reporter and I walked her through my file system at home that I have like my lockbox in my go box, just a few others real quick. Wealth building what I call investing for ownership. And to me, this is my big passion. I am still a very active investor. I go to a lot of the Berkshire Hathaway meetings in Omaha. I bring a lot of that knowledge back, but it's like, I believe everybody can build wealth and you don't have to own a home to do it. So I try to find on-ramps to Wealth building and how to keep wealth as well. Another big category is social security and retirement decisions. A lot of this comes from the My retirement paycheck website that NiFi created. It's no longer up there, but I'm still harvesting some of that and have new information, money in your life. And then we just launched a playlist on home ownership and real estate. So one of the things I bring in as A CFP is not just the investments but real estate as part of that. And that includes home ownership or maybe renting out your first home, which might be a starter home. That's not a common thing among a lot of certified financial planners. Many do do it, but I always try to make sure real estate is mentioned in those. And then finally, climate disasters, preparation and recovery. And I've got new stuff coming out on this.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([23:14](#)):

You've been busy. Yeah, <laugh>, there is no grass going under your feet. I love it. Well, Brent, at the end of each interview we like to ask our guests to share their 2 cents. If you had one piece of advice to leave with our listeners, what would it be?

Brent Neiser ([23:30](#)):

Well, I don't have just one, but <laugh>, I'll just, I'll drop a few if you don't mind since I'm from Kentucky. A big one is don't eat your seed corn. You just can't. These little pieces of savings that can grow into investments or house down payment, they're so precious. And I did the, the um, atomic habits with Andy Ren and this book study on that. And there's so much in that, in that habit idea of these habits or system. But every day try to get 1% better. A couple others is don't ju don't just do something stand there. Sometimes the best thing we can do with money is not do something. And that may mean not overreacting to a market. Downturn not getting panicked when a family member is trying to have you

crack open your IRA to give them something. You've gotta think about long term and that for Warren Buffet from H from Warren Buffet. Be greedy when others are fearful. Be fearful when others are greedy.

Rachael DeLeon ([24:35](#)):

Well Brent, thank you so much for joining us today and tell our listeners where they can connect with you.

Brent Neiser ([24:42](#)):

What's next with Money is a YouTube channel and just type that in. What's next with money? I'm very active on LinkedIn. That's where you'll see me talk about policy issues occasionally. Brent Nier at LinkedIn and I'm on and I have a website, what's next with money.com or you can go to brent nicer.com. It's the same URL and that's what you'll see the type of things I'm doing professionally on boards, public speaking and the YouTube channel.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([25:14](#)):

Well thanks so much for joining.

Brent Neiser ([25:16](#)):

Well thank you both, really appreciate it. Love A-F-C-P-E

Rachael DeLeon ([25:19](#)):

Mary, this was a fun episode today. I always love hearing from Brent. He's been part of our community for so many years and I think you said it, but every time I connect with him you learn something new about his journey and it's been really unique and I love to see that his heart for social work and for people have really thread through his entire career path. Probably one of my most favorite aspects of this episode is just hearing those little tiebacks to A-F-C-P-E and our history. You know, hearing about Barb O'Neill and his connection with A-F-C-P-E and how he used so much of what he's learned at symposiums throughout the year to really support some of the pro bono efforts and the financial planning space. And so it's just really neat to see his range of interests and how A-F-C-P-E has guided those throughout his career.

Dr. Mary Bell Carlson ([26:14](#)):

Yeah, actually Brent is one of the first individuals that I remember meeting when I worked for FPA many years ago when I first started my career and was then and still is a jack of all trades, is what I would call Brent. Just always learning, always growing, always doing something. And the other part is always giving back. You know, it's really cool to watch him come full circle now and still have that desire to have quite a nice website and a great YouTube page and nice edited videos that he's doing for free. Uh, and I just think that's what a give back to the community and to the world, right? To be able to say, here's what I know. And he's always had that passion to share it with others. And so I appreciate him coming on the podcast today.

Rachael DeLeon ([26:56](#)):

And we'll have the link to his pages in our show notes to be sure to check out those videos and share those with those that you know your clients and other consumers.

