

Rachael DeLeon ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to Real Money, Real Experts, where we bring you interviews with leading financial professionals, sharing 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, or A-F-C-P-E.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([00:26](#)):

And I'm your co-host, Dr. Brandy Baxter, accredited financial counselor, A-F-C-P-E member, and your 2025 A-F-C-P-E Board President. On every episode, we take a deep dive into the topics and stories that you care about the most, helping clients, building community, and growing in your work and your career. Joanne is the founder of Financial Healing, bringing Heart and Healing to Money Management, and the California Market Manager of Financial Beginnings, a nonprofit organization providing access to quality financial education programs. As a child of Filipino immigrants and as a student of the public school system, she did not receive ample financial education growing up. She believes this is a deep injustice, so she has made it her mission to make financial education accessible to all, especially those who are minoritized, marginalized, and economically disadvantaged. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her family of five, two of whom are pups where they enjoy playing tennis, going to concerts and adventuring. Joanne, welcome to the show, and we're gonna do something a little different, right? I'm gonna ask you to say your first and last name for our audience, because what they don't know is it just took me two hours and I still didn't get it right. And so out of respect for you, I would love for them to hear your name properly.

Joanne Danganan ([01:58](#)):

Thank you, Brandy I appreciate that. Yeah. My full name is Joanne Danganan. It's the most Filipino name you've probably heard, so, uh, yes, Joanne Danganan.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([02:07](#)):

Love it. And you know, I, as I was reading your bio, I really resonated with the fact that you got into this work of personal finance because of your own journey and your own experience. And so that is what a lot of our listeners have kind of had as a similar trait in their stories, that they've come to this work because of personal experience. So one of the things that we like to ask is tell us more about how did you find yourself in this field of personal finance?

Joanne Danganan ([02:35](#)):

I got to college, I'm a Bruin. Hey Bruins out there. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I got to college and I had borrowed, you know, tens of thousands of dollars in student loans. My parents didn't have the, the have capacity to cover my tuition, and I was determined to go to college right away. And so I found a way through student loans. And the only class I ever received about money was a 30 minute debt lesson that UCLA required in order to borrow money from the institution. Mm-hmm. And so I realized in that moment that, oh my gosh, I'm an 18-year-old, expected to manage this much money in one go without having had <laugh> enough financial education to know what to do with it. I didn't understand at the time the interest rate concept. I didn't understand, you know, the repayment concept when I was, when I was ready to finish college, like none of that was seared into my head enough for me to know what to do. And so I wasn't the only one in the boat. I spoke to a lot of my, my classmates around that time, and they were in the same exact boat. And I thought, oh, my why are, how are we expecting 18 year olds? We are kids at that time. We're, we're barely adults to do that without ample public education. And I live in California where they just, the legislature, this legislature just approved, you know, personal finance standards in public schools. It's 2025. That's not even going to affect until 2027 for the graduating class of 2031. That is insane to me. How are we so slow to realize that the injustice of this lack of financial education is

affecting so many, especially young folks who go through the public school system. And so I've just been so passionate about bringing financial education, especially to those who go to public schools, especially those communities who are under-resourced, because sure enough, they're the ones who are the most lacking in financial resources and financial education. So I, as you can tell, I'm very passionate about <laugh> about this. And I didn't even get into financial education until about 2017 in, in between college. And, and then I was still trying to find my way in the world. But personal finance kept finding its way to me. I, my eventually my family started coming to me for money advice. My friends started coming to me for money advice 'cause they saw I would budget very closely. I talked about money with no shame. And I thought, you know what, in 2017, I realized I should make a pivot. I'm in a job that doesn't feel very fulfilling, and I will take a pay cut. I took a, a significant pay cut from my work as a lobbyist to do this work. And it's not enough money in this work, but I took a chance on myself, on the passion that I felt for it, for financial education. And it's been going really well so far. And I started my financial coaching business as well at the same time. 'cause it just, I wanted to do it all the time. I found not only students in their youth who needed it, but also discovered adults who needed coaching in their finances. And this is my purpose in life.

Rachael DeLeon ([06:17](#)):

I love that. And I feel like your work as a lobbyist, there's probably a lot of overlap or skills that you can take into the work you're doing today. I mean, I can just hear the passion in your voice. You know, I, I think it's incredible that more and more states are passing financial education as a requirement for K through 12, but it's so different based on the state, whether it's a standalone course or whether it's integrated into a math curriculum. And although we're moving in the right direction, I think there's so much more work to be done to really help support teachers to feel prepared to teach these courses. Because a lot of people, you know, even as adults, which you probably see quite a bit now, I mean, still feel, you know, uncomfortable necessarily teaching concepts that they haven't completely grasped either. Oh,

Joanne Danganan ([07:03](#)):

Absolutely. I come across teachers all the time in my work that would rather invite a guest speaker from say a, a local bank than learn the material themselves and teach it. And so I I, I try to encourage them, you know, we all have our own experiences and money that makes us kind of all experts in our own way. And, but you know, there's also resources like Next Gen Personal Finance, which I encourage any teachers listening to look into if they haven't heard about it yet. But they provide absolutely curriculum materials for geared towards educators, and they support educators throughout the year with seminars and workshops. So I'm, I'm a big fan of theirs as well. So I really encourage that for educators who are interested.

Rachael DeLeon ([07:50](#)):

Well, Joanne, you have two roles in your career right now. You work for Financial Beginnings, but you also have a private practice called Financial Healing, bringing heart and healing to Financial Wellness. Tell us a little bit more about the name Financial Healing and how you incorporate these ideas when you're working with clients.

Joanne Danganan ([08:09](#)):

You know, at the time when I started my business in 20, let's see, I officially started it in 2020 during the pandemic. During

Rachael DeLeon ([08:17](#)):

The Pandemic,

Joanne Danganan ([08:18](#)):

Yeah. <laugh>, I figured, you know, what do I got to lose? Not much. Absolutely.

Rachael DeLeon ([08:24](#)):

<laugh>.

Joanne Danganan ([08:26](#)):

<laugh>, yeah. So I started Financial Healing, healing in 2020. And when I was trying to figure out the name of my business, the, the healing part really resonated with me because I needed healing. I grew up in a household where money was a very sensitive topic, and, you know, if my parents were talking, they were likely talking about money mm-hmm <affirmative>. Or fighting about money. And so my, my relationship with money was, was it, it started off as anxious and, and eventually I just started avoiding money altogether. Growing up, I didn't wanna learn about it. I just, any money I received from my parents as allowance I would spend. And so I don't have to think about it <laugh>. And so for myself, I knew I needed healing with my money. You know, I had for maybe at that point, a decade of healing that I brought to myself. You know, I read so many blogs and books about money. I like dove really deeply into how to be successful with money that I realized I must not be the only one. And so when I started getting beta clients and testing out the name, each beta client of mine, I had about nine or 10 really resonated with the name. And so not only are the, were those beta clients looking for money management skills, they were looking to find somebody to just vent to about their issues with money. And because I realized in, in those sessions that it's not just money that we're talking about. We're talking about the baggage that folks bring with money. It's a, it's the experiences that may have been fraught with anger or anxiety like myself, or shame or guilt. Like, there's so much, so many layers to money that, you know, traditional personal finance coaches or financial advisors don't really cover. And so financial healing was born, and I'm really proud of that. And it's funny too, at the time I didn't, I didn't know about the certifications, like financial therapy. I went through one called for financial social work. And so there's a whole body of research and modalities behind this practice. So I'm, I'm really proud to be part of it.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([10:53](#)):

You know, Joanne, I'm glad you mentioned that you have experience in certification as a financial social worker and also as a financial counselor. So combining these two skill sets, a lot of our audience, they're also financial professionals. So what advice would you give to someone who is working with a client and they're like, you know, this client might be experiencing just what Joanne was talking about, this financial anxiety and, and this worry around money. What advice or recommendations would you share?

Joanne Danganan ([11:24](#)):

Well, the AFC program prepared me so much for that. It, I mean, the word counseling itself is, I hope, attractive to individuals who are needing something beyond financial advising. For the counselors who are looking for more of that practice, there are programs like financial therapy that might be more helpful to the client if the counselor doesn't feel comfortable talking through those issues themselves. But for the, for the counselors who are up to the challenge, you don't need that certification necessarily. I bring a lot of my experience into my cases. I I, not only my experience, but I think I'm really good at, actually, I'm, I'm not gonna say I think I am really good at creating a very safe, reflective space. It's non-judgmental. I put on a listening ear for most of my sessions, at least initially, so that I can kind of hear what the client is saying. I also pay attention a lot to their body language. If I see a client even through the screen, all of my sessions are virtual, even through the screen, I can notice a little bit of fidgeting. Or maybe they're like playing with something in their hand while they're answering a question I just asked. And so those little things I really noticed. And I, I have no shame in asking, Hey, what was that for? Oh, what was that hesitation? You hesitated for a second. What were you thinking? And so my, my, my non fear, I guess, of

kind of bringing those issues up to the fore and having them talk through it is, is just like the most powerful thing you can do as a counselor, just asking and pointing it out without the imposing energy. You know, I, I, I feel like the energy is really important too, but building that safe space, first and foremost, as soon as you have a consultation with the potential client, that's the time where you can set the mood or where you really have to set the mood for letting the potential client know this is a safe space. There is no critic, there's no criticisms here. I'm not trying to shame you into thinking that you're not, you're behind on your retirement. No, I am not trying to do that. We're trying to, to bring the shame up and disperse it, somehow disperse it or, or get rid of it completely. Because there's no shame in the way in where you, where anybody is in their financial journey. I

Rachael DeLeon ([14:15](#)):

Think that's so important. And there are so many people that are struggling with the same thing, but not too often people aren't talking to others about money. You know, like your parents, they are talking behind the four walls of your home, but not necessarily out and about. And so you see people thriving, but you don't all often see what's behind the curtain. And I think being able to just create that safety is so critical.

Joanne Danganan ([14:40](#)):

Absolutely. And once that safe space is built, your client will kind of open that floodgate for you. And there's times when I don't even have to ask the question. They'll, they'll share it with you because you have built that space where perhaps they have never had that space before.

Rachael DeLeon ([14:56](#)):

Joanne, you also recently wrote a blog post called The Four Money Languages. Tell us how someone can identify their own personal money language.

Joanne Danganan ([15:06](#)):

Yes, actually, I've been doing that research a little bit more. That blog post was just kind of a, an exploration of what I've been noticing with my clients. So I've actually added a fifth one, there's five and I'm, yeah. And I'm also looking into how that looks 'cause there's other languages of money that I've, I've come across also, not just mine, but uh, in particular for the five languages of money that I've observed, is how are you, the question that it answers is how are you treating your money? How is it exiting your space? You know, whether that's your wallet, your physical wallet, or your digital wallet. How is it exiting? Who is the recipient of your money? And so in the, in this model of five Languages of money, <laugh>, I'm using a little bit of millennial language. So the first one, and I fall under it, is yolo. For those of you who are not millennials, that means you only live once. And disclaimer too, none of these languages are meant to shame anybody. It's meant to enlighten you into how again you are treating your money. So first is yolo, and this is when you receive money and you spend it right away on things that may or may not be in your budget. You could be a well budgeted person, you could still be a YOLO person. Next one is a slow burner. This is my partner. Conrad. He is a slow burner. He prefers, and people in this category prefer to save the money first before they spend it on something that they want or need in the long, in the shorter, long term. He, for example, when he was younger, learned this language when he worked for his dad building homes, and he would save up his money. And the first thing that he bought with his \$600 was a, a new bike. And so these folks really savor the delayed gratitude. I'm sorry, the, they, they really savor the delayed gratification. The third language is the giver. The giver is somebody who likes or enjoys or finds joy in giving money to others in the form of charity, in tithing, or in giving it back to their families. So I, for example, I come from a very large Filipino family. Some of us are here in the US, some are in the, are in Canada, some are back in the Philippines. Actually the majority of us are back in the Philippines. And Filipinos love to send money back to their families in, in the Philippines,

which is a very impoverished country. Right. So that's a form of giving. of course, but sometimes it's at the detriment to your wallet. Maybe it's a little more than you should, right? And according to your budget. The fourth one is nest egg. These are folks who have insane levels of delayed gratification. Like they are, they are savings our money for retirement. Folks who fall under the fire category mm-hmm. Which is the acronym for financial independence, retire Early. These are really intense savers and investors who are really building that nest egg for the future. And then finally the fifth one is survivor. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. These are the folks who, who are always anxious about when, where rent is coming from or if they need to choose between driving to work and feeding their kids. And that mentality may even last beyond when the financial capacity is actually there. And they rationally don't need to worry about money, but they still have that survivor mode stuck and the grooves are in their brain for that, for that, you know, mode of a, of action or mode of thinking. And so in my obs observation with my clients, and even just talking to friends and family about money, you can have multiple languages. There's multiple ways that you can treat money and you can have multiple languages. You might have a different language and a different age that you know in a different time of your life than currently. So it, it's a very dynamic model. And so I, I'm really proud of, of what I've found because when I can name in a client how they treat their money, most commonly it's one or, or a few of these languages. And when I can name it for them, kind of a light bulb pops up over their head and they're like, oh yeah, that's right. <laugh>, I am a giver <laugh> or I'm a yellow shoot. And it's, it just kind of brings a level of, of awareness that perhaps they didn't have before. And

Rachael DeLeon ([20:26](#)):

Language they can understand too. I feel like you're giving a name to something that resonates.

Joanne Danganan ([20:32](#)):

Yes. Yeah. 'cause it's universal the way that we interact with money.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([20:37](#)):

Joanne, thank you so much for just going a little deeper for us 'cause your blog post did not have all of that that you just shared with us. And I really love how you were intentional, right, before you even started describing these languages. You're like, this is not to shame anyone. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I think so often financial services has gotten a bad rap for making people feel shame around things that are just natural to who they are. And so as we are working with our clients and we're trying to encourage and support them to move toward financial freedom, what steps do you believe are some of the first steps that someone should take?

Joanne Danganan ([21:15](#)):

Oh, great question. If they are unable to perhaps afford financial counseling or find a counselor in their area, I am gonna go a little corny and say, start with journaling. I encourage all my clients to journal when it comes to really hard things about money. If something is really difficult in their minds and they can't, maybe it's very complex. Journaling is a powerful tool that I encourage anybody to, to partake in. So journaling is a great way to think it through. And it's also a great way to kind of expel those, perhaps those negative feelings around money. And putting it on paper is kind of like the Pensieve and Harry Potter, like where the Pensieve houses memories that your, your brain no longer can house the Pensieve as your journal should be the repository for, for feelings that don't serve you, whether that is shame or guilt around money. For me it's anxiety. So that's one. The second, talk to your friends, talk to your family who talk to somebody whom you trust and whom you know won't bring the judgment and the shame perhaps that you're bringing yourself. You know, there's so much self shaming that we do. We've been taught to self shame in this society about around money. And so find that individual or individuals who you feel most comfortable with and just sharing that burden that you're feeling. Because if, if even just

talking about it is difficult, that's a challenge that we need to rise to. You know, if I think of fear as the thing that you kind of have to go towards if you're afraid of something, in this case, if you're afraid of talking about money, take the steps to get to where you can talk about money without feeling that shame or judgment or criticism.

Rachael DeLeon ([23:30](#)):

Yeah. And I think sometimes even talking to friends or family can be more difficult than talking to someone that you don't have that connection to. I'm just curious, are there, do you have any advice in terms of how to have better money, conversations with loved ones or family members?

Joanne Danganan ([23:47](#)):

Yes. Rachel, I love that you said that. I have actually worked with families perhaps whose, you know, whose parents or whose children are unable to talk to each other. And so they hire a financial counselor like myself. And so just to answer your, the first part of your question, like, yes, talking to a professional might be the best way to talk about money, and that might be the best way to dispel the shame or the judgment that you're feeling around money. But to your second part of your question, I think it's important to be picky about who you talk about money to initially at least being picky, like I said, about who do you feel safe with, right? And who, and because that's the first question that will help you find a space who builds that space already for you. Whatever you're talking about, who builds that space, I think that's the most important because everything else will come, will come after that. If, if a space is safe for you, then you'll also feel safe talking about money.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([24:57](#)):

And that's actually a perfect segue. So one of the things that Rachel and I love to do here is we are building what we call our bank of quotes. And so at the end of our episode, we ask our guests to share their 2 cents. So Joanne, what is your real money quote that we can add to our bank?

Joanne Danganan ([25:20](#)):

Oh, <laugh>. Um, I did not prepare for this. I do have one. And it's self-reflection and self-awareness with your money are just as important if not more important than the numbers on your financial statements. Because what is happening in your money life may be a reflection of what is happening in your life overall.

Rachael DeLeon ([25:43](#)):

Yeah, we always say personal finance is more than the numbers and I think that really, really resonates.

Joanne Danganan ([25:49](#)):

That's why I resonated with the AFC program. When I found it. I was like, this is what I've been looking for all my life for myself and I'm excited to bring it to others.

Rachael DeLeon ([25:59](#)):

I love that. Joanne, thank you so much for coming on the show today. It was so fun to talk to you. For all of our listeners, can you tell them where they can follow you?

Joanne Danganan ([26:08](#)):

Yes, I am on substack, just Google financial healing. I think my handle is financial healing. I'm also on email, so if you wanna subscribe to my email, just go to financial healing.com and subscribe.

Rachael DeLeon ([26:22](#)):

Thank you again.

Joanne Danganan ([26:24](#)):

Thank you all so much. This was so fun.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([26:27](#)):

Rachel, what a great chat. Today with Joanne. I feel like a lot of our listeners will resonate with what she was talking about regarding financial anxiety and, and just how there's so much emotion around money. And the takeaway for me was when she said journaling, it seems so obvious and so simple, but yet we all know that it can be so impactful to just step outside of the narrative that's in our minds and put it onto paper so then you can then have a plan of how you wanna navigate. And I think that for me was one of the best things that she said, and I can immediately start applying that with my clients.

Rachael DeLeon ([27:07](#)):

Yeah, I agree. I love Joanne's authenticity and the way she shared her journey into personal finance. And I love the practical research she's doing to kind of develop these money languages and starting to hone. And I like that she started with four and now there's five. Like you can see her in the process of starting to develop those and break down stigmas, giving them names that like really resonate with a lot of different people. A really cool conversation and excited to see her later this November in Phoenix at Symposium.

Dr. Brandy Baxter ([27:43](#)):

Absolutely. I can't wait to see her at symposium and just give her a big hug for working with me and navigating the very incorrect pronunciation of her name <laugh>. She was so gracious with that. I just, yeah, I can't wait to see her 'em first.

Rachael DeLeon ([27:57](#)):

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 in it 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.