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Book suggests taking advice from Scrooge

By Susan Morris
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One thing is certain this holiday season: Many of us will feel incredible stress.

It's likely that money worries will trigger many of our anxieties. A recent survey by the American Psychological Association shows unresolved money issues as the No. 1 stressor for nearly 73 percent of Americans -- and this wasn't even at Christmastime.

Telling ourselves to "save more," "spend less" and "work harder" doesn't usually alleviate the anxiety. According to author, coach and consultant Ted Klontz, our relationship with money is too complicated for such simple solutions.

Klontz says it's our subconscious conflicting thoughts that cause destructive money behavior. And they usually have nothing to do with money.

Klontz, Rich Kahlar and Brad Klontz are the authors of "The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge: Transforming Your relationship -- 5 Principles to Transform Your Relationship with Money." (Health Communications 2006, \$14.95).

The authors use the story of Scrooge to explain ways to overcome money hang-ups. Scrooge, they argue, is an excellent role model, as someone who in his later years discovered the origins of his beliefs about money and changed them.

Filled with the authors' personal stories, the book offers tips and tools. A favorite of mine: a way to write down expenditures that helps determine your behavior, thinking and feelings about money during the day.

The book concludes by describing how we can modify what we do that currently dictates our behavior.

The Ebenezer Scrooge angle is hokey. But the premise behind the book makes sense. Too often, we make money decisions that hurt us financially and yet we keep right on making them. It would pay off to find out what is driving us.

If you like self-help books (I do), you may find the exercises in the book useful. Ebenezer Scrooge transformed himself in 12 hours. It's likely the rest of us will take considerably longer. But it's never too late to start.

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