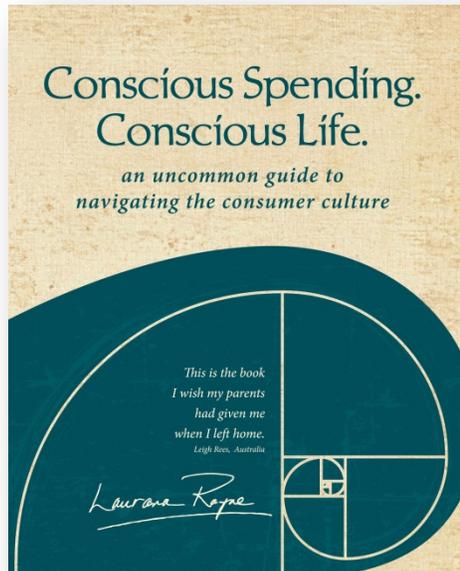


# *The Uncommon Guides*

*Laurana Rayne on conscious spending and thriving.*



In a consumer world, it's incredibly easy to make poor choices that haunt us for years. Usually, we are deep in difficulty by the time anyone stops us. To prevent this, the best approach is conscious spending.

*Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* enriches the way we look at money and at life. It's packed with practical information and thought-provoking ideas which help readers think for themselves and move toward financially sustainable life choices.

Based on author Laurana Rayne's long-time experience as a college instructor, this book is sprinkled with personal anecdotes, relevant stories, clearly-written examples, and useful diagrams. It's intended to inspire all of us to broaden our perspectives, ask questions, think independently, and cultivate common sense. It's the kind of book that can be reread many times, always offering something useful.

*Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* is not a textbook. One reviewer described it as being "like a conversation with a wise and caring friend." Another said, "Written in clear, concise language for a broad audience, Rayne meticulously explains the complexities of our consumer culture, and presents thought-provoking choices to achieve sound, common-sense practices in our daily lives."

It's an ideal reference for people who are starting out, starting over, regrouping, or rethinking their lives – a manual for anyone wanting to move from unconscious consumption to conscious spending.

## Book Details

### Conscious Spending. Conscious Life.

*an uncommon guide to navigating the consumer culture*

by Laurana Rayne

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## About the Author



*Laurana Rayne taught consumer issues to college students for twenty-seven years and observes consumer behaviour globally through her travels. This experience has made her keenly aware*

*of the challenges that we all face as we navigate the consumer culture, and she is passionate about sharing her insights to level the playing field. When not teaching, writing, speaking, or travelling, she hangs her many hats in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.*

# *What people are saying about Conscious Spending, Conscious Life.*

## **Valuable consumer insights...**

*Alan Rach, Journalist*

In an age of rampant marketing and instant access to credit, Laurana Rayne's *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* is a refreshing perspective on how to navigate the labyrinthian pathways of today's consumer culture.

## **I'm thinking differently...**

*Kathryn Perkins, Reader*

I have your book. I've learned new things and am thinking differently about how I manage my money and how I think of my money with regard to how I live my life. It has given me valuable new ideas. Thank you!

## **A thoroughly reader-friendly commentary on living successfully in the modern era...**

*Mary Cowper, Midwest Book Review*

*Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* is a complete course of thoroughly "reader friendly" commentary, real life examples, advice, strategies, and techniques that will enable anyone seeking to avoid common mistakes and succeed to create a solvent and successful life for themselves in the modern era.

## **Invaluable for debtors and the young people we love ...**

*Megan McPherson, Certified Insolvency Counsellor*

I just finished reading *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life*. And I must say, after having worked in the world of insolvency for many years, the tips and information provided by Laurana Rayne are invaluable and the book should be made available to all of our debtors and the young people we love!

## **Like a conversation with a wise and caring friend...**

*Fran Genereux, Professional Home Economist, Teacher, and Guidance Counsellor*

It is like a conversation with a wise and caring friend who challenges you as a consumer to look at more than the price tag and examine your beliefs, your values, and your actions.

Readers will find lots to think about.

## Q & A

### **What inspired you to write the book *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life*?**

For many years I taught a college course about issues in consumer economics. I could always find money management books for a portion of what I was teaching, but none covered the remainder of my content: *self* management in a consumer context. This book started out as a small supplement for my students, and then morphed into a full-blown book for the general public at many stages of life.

### **What message would you like people to take from this book?**

I would like people to be reassured that it is possible to navigate the challenging waters of the consumer culture without becoming over-indebted or losing their sense of self. In fact, figuring out how to skilfully make our way through life is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth. *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* was written as a guidebook for this journey.

### **Who can benefit from reading this book, then?**

Age has proven not to be a factor. *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* is helpful for anyone starting out, starting over, regrouping, or re-thinking their lives.

### **Do you believe this book can change a person's relationship with money?**

Yes—if the person chooses to work with it. Change isn't easy and usually requires an adjustment in mindset. The factual information and philosophical approaches presented in *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* are good catalysts for anyone who is willing to see things differently and act accordingly.

### **Why do you call your book an "uncommon guide?"**

My book is different from the usual money management book in several ways:

✓ *This book is about questions rather than answers.* It doesn't tell readers what they should do. Instead, it provides insights and raises questions, allowing them to decide what they will choose to do for the life *they* want. This gives it a different tone from the many prescriptive self-help books available.

✓ *It talks about managing yourself,* whereas personal finance books usually speak in terms of managing your money. Monitoring viewpoints and mindsets, cultivating resourcefulness, maintaining perspective, retaining balance in changing circumstances, being aware of ethics and holding ourselves to high standards, developing healthy skepticism and common sense—how we do these things has enormous impact on how we deal with money. Therefore, this book covers much more than money.

✓ *There are wide margins to allow for making notes while reading.* It's the kind of content that calls for note-making—something sparks a thought as you're reading and you don't want to lose the thread of the idea.

✓ *There's a section to help readers learn the language of financial sustainability.* Going beyond the usual glossary, it's divided into topic areas. It's an effective way to get a concentrated introduction to key words in an area of interest.

✓ *This book is a catalyst for starting conversations.* The "think-about's" at the end of each chapter, as well as the section near the end called "Strategies & Principles to Live By," are rich sources of things to talk about.

### **Why was it so important for you to write this book?**

Living in a consumer culture is tricky. There are a lot of external pressures from businesses wanting us to buy, and then buy more. People are vulnerable to making long-lasting mistakes if they don't have both a strong sense of themselves and an understanding of how the system works. I wrote *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* to level the playing field. This book encourages thinking for ourselves to make lives we want rather than reacting in knee-jerk fashion to the consumer story about what we should have.

### **You use the phrase "making a life." Exactly what do you mean by that?**

Making a life means consciously thinking about what we are doing and how we want to live. It means thinking about how we will utilize our resources (talents and abilities, money, family and community connections) to live in a way that expresses what is important to us, our values. It means we are not automatically defaulting to the demands and pressures to buy without thinking. Instead we make conscious decisions to take us in the direction of living a life that will be deeply satisfying.

### **How can this book help people think, function, and live in more satisfying ways?**

It is based on the premise that we must think for ourselves. In a consumption-based economy, that can be challenging because there is strong corporate marketing of a never-ending parade of things for us to buy. Participating in this has led to unprecedented levels of consumer debt, and people are experiencing anxiety, fatigue, and social disconnection as a consequence. Conscious spending – making money decisions mindfully – is the alternative. When we shape our lives consciously, we are connected with what life is really about. When we do what matters most to us, we experience an increase in our deep inner feelings of contentment and satisfaction.

### **What can people learn about themselves by reading *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life*?**

It depends where they are in their own personal development. This book provides a rich opportunity for self-reflection. At the same time, it has a lot of practical information that helps readers develop sensible strategies to suit their current situation. *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life* can be read on many levels, and re-read as a person moves through various stages of life.

### **Why do you talk about the costs of money?**

The amount we pay for borrowed money is one of the least-understood pitfalls of using credit. Sure, people may know that their credit card charges an interest rate of 18.5% interest. But they don't understand the long-term implications of this rate when they only make the minimum payment each month. This point is illustrated in the following scenario from the section on credit cards (p 187).

Balance = \$3172

First month payment = \$63

Annual interest rate = 18.5%

Suppose you spent that money on a fabulous vacation to celebrate your 20th birthday. Assume you buy nothing else on this credit card and faithfully make the minimum payment each month. How old will you be when you make the last payment for that birthday trip? How much interest will you pay in total during that time?

According to information taken directly from the credit card statement used for this example, the balance will be fully paid off in 42 years, 8 months. Therefore, you will be four months shy of your 63rd birthday when you make that last payment on your 20th birthday celebration.

How much interest will be paid? This is not part of the required information on a credit card statement, so I found the answer by using an online calculator. According to the calculator, you will pay out a total of \$12,623 for that trip worth \$3172. The interest is therefore \$9,451. (Total paid of \$12,623 - original cost of \$3,172 = interest of \$9,451.) The interest is three times the original cost of your celebratory trip. That's a huge surcharge, and I can't help wondering if anything is worth that much extra.

# About *Conscious Spending, Conscious Life.*

## Premises

- In a consumer world, it's incredibly easy to make poor choices that haunt us for years. Usually we are deep in difficulty before anyone stops us.
- Since we can't avoid the consumer culture, our best bet is to learn to navigate it with skill and finesse.
- We need to take responsibility for our own physical and financial well-being because commercial interests have a different agenda.
- Treacherous tools (i.e. credit cards) are readily available to the inexperienced and unprepared. Someone needs to level the playing field by providing information and insights into the workings of the system.
- Circumstances change and so do people. This requires regrouping and rethinking. At such times, it helps to read about different perspectives.
- *How* we think and *that* we think is crucial.

## This book is about...

- *money*, and how we choose to live in relation to it.
- *financial sustainability* (based on our thinking) rather than just money management (which is based on techniques).
- *personal growth*, with money as the catalyst for conversations and self-awareness.
- *making the life we want*, rather than reacting in knee-jerk fashion to the cultural story about what life should be.
- *deciding mindfully*, rather than blindly following roles and rules.
- *considering the bigger picture*, rather than having tunnel vision.
- *insights* into the workings and dilemmas of the culture, rather than specifying a set of instructions about what to do.
- *self management* rather than money management.

## The four parts

- 1 Economics, Illusions & the Consumer Culture
- 2 Fraud, Ethics & Justice in Our Transactions
- 3 Money, Power & Making a Life
- 4 Health, Safety & Integrity of the Future

## Approach

- The content is a combination of the practical and philosophical. For example, thrift is discussed in conjunction with the viewpoint that “cheap” does not usually mean good value when we think in terms of social cost.
- This book is not about deprivation, doing without, or retreating to the woods. It is about mindful engagement with the consumer culture.
- The money management and self management aspects are woven together throughout. This provides a holistic perspective on skilfully navigating the consumer culture.

## Key words

- *Financial aspects include:* constructive and destructive debt, credit cards, payday loans, debt-to-income ratio, bankruptcy, inflation, capital gains, progressive tax system, risk and return, amortization, foreclosure, mutual funds, RRSP, TFSA, stock market index, estate planning, term and cash value insurance, probate, executor, beneficiary, holograph will, emergency fund, thrift, standard of living and quality of life
- *Philosophical, self-management layer includes:* values, awareness, authenticity, sustainability, empowerment, mindfulness, common sense, perspective, viewpoint, self-responsibility, resourcefulness, resilience, conscious choice, discernment, freedom, autonomy, thrift, social responsibility, mindset, intention, enough, value and worth, uncertainty, change, unintended consequences, precautionary principle

## Major challenges of living in a consumer culture

- Avoiding destructive debt.
- Writing our life stories as we want them to be, instead of reacting to peer and corporate pressure.
- Knowing how much is enough.
- Finding meaningful ways to determine value and worth.
- Managing ourselves and holding true to our values in a persuasive culture.
- Making decisions in situations where answers are not clear-cut.

## To navigate the consumer culture skilfully, it takes...

- understanding the cultural metanarrative, the big story about how things “should be.”
- using all our resources, including our *whole* brain and gut feelings.
- developing a sense of what’s important to us.
- engaging with the consumer world on our own terms, which starts with knowing what’s important to us.
- identifying and addressing our inner obstacles.
- keeping an open mind.
- being willing to question the conventional wisdom and look for other ways of doing things.
- maintaining perspective and balance.
- thinking about ethics and holding ourselves to high standards.
- cultivating healthy skepticism and common sense.

## This book is for anyone who is...

- starting out (doesn’t know how the system works and is subject to peer pressure).
- starting over (bankruptcy, business collapse, job loss).
- regrouping after a difficult experience (divorce, kids moving back home, death of spouse or partner).
- rethinking (midlife crisis, taking another look to see things in a new light).

It also appeals to those who are open to thinking for themselves but lack the confidence to contradict the cultural story. For many people, the perspectives in this book are confirmation of their own good sense.

## More information at

Google books (full text available)

<https://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=isbn:1481140116>

Amazon (look inside feature)

<http://www.amazon.com/Conscious-Spending-Life-uncommon-navigating/dp/1481140116/>

Author’s website

<http://www.theuncommonguides.com/book-2/e-book-supplement/>

This section contains table of contents, author notes, illustrations, think-about from the end of each chapter, and sample chapters: “The Costs of Money” and “Strategies & Principles to Live By.”

*Quotes from  
Conscious Spending, Conscious Life.*

“**A**lthough control is not possible, mastery is. And that’s what this book is about – mastering the art of living your life skillfully as you navigate the tricky waters of the consumer culture.” (p xviii)

“**S**ome people aspire to being financially clever. This book takes you beyond that to financial sustainability.” (p xviii)

“**T** rue freedom comes from exercising autonomy over our lives. The consumer culture discourages that, preferring we adopt the cultural story about how to live. Our challenge is to detach ourselves from the cultural story and look at the illusions surrounding freedom and choice.” (p 94)

“**M**aking a life allows you to write your own story – that is, you get to engage with the consumer world on your own terms. The first step is to become aware of what you want your life story to be. The second is to question the cultural metanarrative [big story], and the third is to practice consciously making your own decisions.” (p 80)

“**I**f you learn how to identify ‘enough,’ you will find it much easier to navigate the consumer culture because more things will be non-issues.” (p 85)

“**O**nce you gain insight into the misconceptions and hidden agendas that have been directing how you relate to money, you have the power to make other choices. You have authority over your actions. You are in charge, rather than your subconscious.” (p 93)

“**L**iving consciously is where true power resides in your relationship with money.” (p 93)

“**W**hen [we respond] reflexively rather than consciously, we have lost our capacity to use discernment. Discernment is the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure. It requires keen insight and good judgment, challenging us to go beyond superficial perception. As we practice our ability to be discerning, we develop a wisdom that enables us to understand difficult situations and to make good decisions in such circumstances.” (p 306)

“**W**hen we are aware of the narrative [the cultural story of how we should live], we can decide for ourselves if that’s how we want to live the story of our own lives. This requires us to be willing to question, to have an open mind, to look for other ways, and to develop a sense of what is important to us. That’s what this book is about.” (p 32)