

Ep #31: The Smart + Stupid Moves I Made From \$5K-\$80K Months



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Jess McKinley Uyeno

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When it comes to money, there is nothing that I would be quicker to drop cash for than transparency. Tell me exactly what was going down in this phase of your business. We see these mentors out there. We see these people out there that have what we want, that are at a different place and at the next level. Maybe they're at a different earning bracket, or maybe you have a business and you want to franchise it, and this person has done tons of franchises, right? There isn't a person on Shark Tank sitting in one of those seats as a shark that we wouldn't want transparency behind one of their seasons.

And so, I always figure the least I can do for you is to give you guys some insights into what was going on in all six of the money games during the different phases of what I was earning. Because it's easy for me to blanket statement say, "Okay, cool. I believe you should invest in this," or "I believe you should invest in that." And there really isn't a right way to do this.

So this episode isn't about you looking and seeing, "Okay, she was making that and she invested this much, so I should do that," or, "She didn't invest in this way, so I shouldn't do that." It's just to give you some more context. I always think it's helpful to give examples because, at the end of the day, some of the things that I did worked out. Some of the things I did were smart. Some of them I would do again, and others of them were just not as impactful as I thought they were going to be. And I'm going to give you the insights along the way. But I'm going to break it down into different milestones so that you can understand what ones were smart and what ones weren't.

If you listen to this episode all the way through, I gave this insights in a program last year, and people said it was one of the most valuable audios that I've ever done. So I can't wait to hear your guys' feedback on this. You're listening to Fun Money. This is your host, Jess McKinley Uyeno, mentor to The Most Interesting Women in the World. And this is episode number 31.

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All right, let's get down and dirty with some nitty-gritty details. So some of these are “smart,” quote-unquote, money moves that I made, and some of them were nonsensical. And honestly, what is defined as smart and nonsensical is sometimes defined in the moment and sometimes defined with hindsight. Because usually the things that didn't make sense along my journey to anyone else, but I just knew I had to move forward with what I was doing with my money. Like, what was happening wasn't working, and I needed to shake things up sometimes. And oftentimes, those were the catalysts for some really big shifts in my income and shifts in my net worth.

And so I'm going to share it with you, and I want you to really just think about the fact that all of this is, again, my experience, and our experiences are totally different. This was my first, quote-unquote, “business” that was fully entrepreneurial and not intrapreneurial. But also too, my circumstances of my life were very exceptional. They were very different.

I mean, we all have our reasons to wait and hesitate, but for me, at the time when I was really growing my business, when I was starting to take it seriously and not just be a jobby, right? One of those hobbies that we call a job but we don't get paid for it, so it's really a hobby, is really, I was a single mom. I was going through that at the time, and my personal life felt very fragile and scary. And so I made these moves with that going on. I think that context is important.

So, at \$5k per month, and so this for me meant that it was the first year that I was starting to take my business pretty seriously. And I would say this was like \$5k was where I was starting to get consistent, but it wasn't coming in from consistent offers. It was like, okay, I was having this person at this price, and then I would raise my price, and then I would have this person, and it was just kind of throwing spaghetti at the wall phase of my business. So that was to give you context, that was \$73k a year that I made that year.

I got a free mall makeover and had my boyfriend, who is now my husband, take pretty great photos outside of the mall with a brick wall background.

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You could probably go back a couple of years, not that far, to find some of these photos, and I thought they were pretty good. So I got the free mall makeover, and I was like, "Why are people paying for these headshots?" Phones are pretty good. This is pretty good.

Now, I love to invest in photos right now, but I just had the understanding that I needed a large amount of the money that was coming in to pay for my life. I was right paycheck to paycheck. So I was keeping it scrappy. I bartered for everything in this phase. Everything I could, I bartered for a website. I bartered for admin work. I bartered for bookkeeping work. I was coaching these people for free, and then they were doing the work for me. So at this phase, I was still bartering.

I learned You Need A Budget and calmed my nervous system. That was one of the best things that I did during this phase. It was learning how I was using my money. I was just so clear about every dollar had a role, so that I could see if I wanted to spend more, if I wanted to invest more, how much did I have to earn, or I could work it a couple of ways. I'd be like, "All right, I spent this much on this. Could I spend a little bit less? Could I pay myself less? What would that look like?" And during this phase, I paid myself \$2500 for the month. So I was living like in New York, that was my rent plus like a couple of hundred dollars. I was eating ramen, basically, and it was such a treat. I remember to get Starbucks in this phase of my life, but every other dollar, I reinvested back into the business.

I also began to build a business reserve. There was nothing that scared me more that time than the idea that I was going to make a new decision and then someone was not going to like it and want their money back, and I wasn't going to be able to do it. So I wanted to build up this business reserve so that I could move faster. I just knew I was like, "Things are changing. I'm moving." And lo and behold, no one asked for any refund at all for years and years and years. I never had someone ask for a refund of their money. Never. Which is something I'm super proud of. But I will say that building up this business reserve built up a mental space for me.

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There's something that is so sexy about savings. It built up a mental capacity for me to move faster, make decisions faster, and have my own back because I wasn't worried about this worst-case scenario of what if someone wants a refund, right? So I built up a business reserve of that amount in case someone wanted money back.

I made friends with people making more money than me. So this was one of those times when I really got laser-focused of like, this is where I'm going. I know that I'm the average of the five people I spend the most time with. And so I was like, one of my main goals was to earn more, was to create more. And I was like, "How are these people thinking that have multiple businesses, that it's normal for them to be making \$200k?" That was something that I was like, "Oh, huh, what do these people think that's different from me?"

I invested in a live event with my own money. So I decided to do a live event as a surprise for all of my one-on-one clients to bring them together to just have an opportunity to teach live, to see what that felt like. And I pulled it all from my personal account. I was like, "All right, I'm going to do it up." I hired everything in my brand colors. I got like a balloon arch, and I got Pop-Tarts custom-made in my brand colors. I got a female DJ. It was so sick. I was just so... Looking back, right, it feels so kind of small. I think there were maybe 15 women, and it was just in the common area space, which is actually gorgeous in this apartment building that I used to live in. And it felt like another level. I wanted to be on stages, so I built my own. That investment, that money investment at that phase, was a huge identity upgrade for me.

I stopped receiving child support and money inflows that didn't feel good to future me. So this one was definitely controversial at the time because I was not making so much money that this was a logical thing to do, but I can just tell you that again, I wanted to be able to move freely and make decisions and not feel judgment or guilt or anything. And I absolutely

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believe that I was entitled to this. However, it just didn't feel good. My ex-husband and I, at the time, were both trying to just make ends meet and trying to figure out if we could afford houses and everything. And I was like, "I want to earn every dollar myself, and we're going to split all of the costs." We were doing fifty-fifty expenses. And the way that child support was created was, of course, to support me, who, at the time when we split, didn't have really much of an income at all. I think I had made \$18,000 just as a stay-at-home mom doing some network marketing. And that was what that was based off of.

And once I had gotten myself to the place where I was making like \$60,000, \$70,000, I was like, "You know what? I'm going to make more. I'm going to make more. I want to get rid of this." And so from that point out, I decided to stop receiving child support, which felt so empowering to me. Again, this is my experience. It's not me saying that everyone should do this, but it felt amazing to me. And it also was something that really solidified the relationship with my co-parenting ex, and it was a respect thing. We both just felt really aligned with this.

So just a reminder to yourself that you get to be so empowered in any financial decision that you make about yourself. If something doesn't feel good to you, or it feels good to you, follow your instincts. It just didn't feel good to me to receive for my particular situation. And so I was like, "You know what? I'm not going to really listen to what anyone else thinks. That's what I'm going to do." And my income definitely took off from that point.

I worked one-off cash jobs to create safety, and I also held on to the residual income from my network marketing gig. So I was making an additional about maybe a thousand, maybe a little more, a month from that. And if I felt like things were getting tight or I wanted to work an investment, I just wasn't beneath anything. I would do little gigs. I think I did some event coordination gigs. I was doing some guest speaking. I bartended one night.

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I worked at a coffee shop that my friend had opened. I worked a shift for her to help her out. And it was just like, "I'm not beneath anything."

And I think that if you really have a goal, I think some people, they put so much pressure on themselves because they're scared that they're not going to make enough money, and then they show up in lack, and it just really gets gross. And I created some temporary one-off cash jobs to give myself the safety so that I could continue to experiment and to play in my business.

And at this point, I got certified. So I got certified as a life coach, not for credibility or because I felt like I had to, but to match with my future identity. I wanted to be the best coach in the world, and I found a school that really, I just thought the tools were incredible, and I wanted to deepen my skills and my practice as a coach. And so I got certified, and it was a big investment. It was 1\$18,000. And \$18,000 when you're making \$73,000, on paper, maybe that doesn't sound logical, but for me, I just knew that this was how I became my future self. I knew it in my bones, and it was true.

So that was when I was making about \$5k months. Then when I was at \$10k months, so this was the year that I made \$136,000, an average of a little over \$10k months. I did not upgrade my cost of living. So huge. I had an opportunity to go into a different apartment that was more expensive, and I just said, "This is what I am interested in paying, period." That's not my priority to upgrade this cost of living. And it was a very interesting conversation with my boyfriend, and ultimately, he understood, and he respected it. And it was a great moment for me to just really realign and re-audit what matters to me right now. What is money for?

You should always be asking yourself this question. This is how money stays fun, because otherwise, like we talked about in an episode or two ago, all of the money mistakes and traps that we can fall into as we make more money, the keeping up with the Joneses, trying to make things more

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convenient for ourselves, even in ways that aren't aligned. So I was really clear there.

I also didn't pay myself more for two years. So for two years, my income doubled. It went up and up, and I didn't pay myself more to my personal account. So I continued to bring it into the business, reinvest it into the business.

I hired the best coach I could find, and I got in on their highest level of mentorship. So for me, I'm just not a toe-dipper. I'm not interested in coming in and doing the lower-level stuff. I want to come in. I want to be right-hand to these people. And I've done this with three different coaches where I've come in, whether they have a really big community of hundreds or whatever, and I come in, and I immediately make friends with the people who are doing the best work, and I see how can I help them and serve them and what can I give back to them. And so that was a big investment that year. That was the year that I believe I started spending \$50,000 on coaching.

So, right again, a big portion, more than a third of what I made that year, I reinvested into coaching, knowing that this was... I wanted to get myself into a mental boot camp where I was so... It's almost like a positive brainwashing. I don't know how else to explain it, but I enjoy... If I decide to do a physical challenge, I'm like, "Okay, I can't be listening to other people who are like, 'Oh, it's not, no big deal. Just come and have tacos on Tuesday and have whatever.'" It's like, no. Eyes on the prize. I want to be around people who are like, "No pain, no gain. Let's go." And I just immerse myself into these zones and have fun with it, right?

This isn't about losing your own autonomy over what you're thinking. It's about giving yourself the tools in terms of thoughts and beliefs to get to the next level. And scientifically, it is backed to... If you want to change something, you have to change your neuroplasticity, which means you cannot just repeat something and go in and go with action. You have to do

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it in an emotional way. It has to be obsession. It has to be intensity. And when you show up repetitively with intensity and emotion, that's when things really begin to shift.

So this was the year that I was like, "All right, I know that my investments are going up, and it's just the best of the best or nothing else." I doubled my personal savings goal. So I talked about the business reserves before. Now I had a business reserves, and I doubled that goal, and I also doubled my personal savings goal. So what was previously in my emergency fund was not that much, and now I was like, "Okay, cool. I want to begin to have that personally as well."

Being a single mom, at that point, we had moved in with my boyfriend, and things were progressing, but I just really felt like, "Okay, I want to give myself every angle of security that I can." And that didn't look like hoarding my money and not investing it and not spending it, but it did look like getting really intentional about all the money games, right? It's like, "Okay, this is how I'm spending, this is how I'm investing, and this is how I'm saving."

I aged my money. So when you come into my world, I teach a process inside of budgeting where you are breaking the cycle of how long your money lasts you. So when people say they're in a paycheck-to-paycheck cycle, the age of their money maybe is two weeks or maybe it is seven days, depending on how frequently you get paid.

But in the case of an entrepreneur, I just knew it was important for me to get my money to a 30-day amount plus, where I didn't need any new money to come in for 30 days in order to pay my bills for my business or for my personal life. And so I aged my money, and I got really specific, and there's a tool that I teach people on inside of You Need a Budget that teaches you how to track this, how to see what the age of your money is. And that was huge for me to see, "Oh my gosh, okay, I got it over 30 days," and then I got to 40 days, and I got to 50 days, and I got to 86 days. And

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really, anytime in between there, anything over that, I think you're probably underspending and underinvesting and underpaying yourself. But that sweet spot just reminded me that I was maturing in the money game. I was like leveling up. These are the different metrics that I look at.

So in that \$10k per month zone, I also automated my credit card payment and never turned back. This is when I stopped looking at things manually. I was no longer scared that I was going to spend an amount on my credit card and then not have the money to pay for it. Because I had previously not used credit cards before this phase of my life because I was so scared of debt that I was missing out on all of the benefits of building credit.

So I learned more about credit. I believe I also hired at this phase, I hired someone to fix my credit score, and I just learned a little bit more about that because I was thinking about buying a house, which we ended up doing the following year, but I was getting ahead of it. I was learning more. And yes, so I automated my credit card payments, and I never turned back.

From this point, I don't even know what the balance is on my credit cards ever because I spend more time making sure that I have given every dollar a role, and I've planned for what the dollars are going to go for, so that when the credit card bill is paid, it's like I know that I have that money because I've already assigned the money towards the credit card. So I am a transactor. It means that I never let a balance go over on my credit card. Doesn't mean that I wouldn't in a certain situation, but I would never do it without a plan to get aggressive about getting rid of the debt. And so, yeah, automated that credit card payment, never turned back.

I also tripled my price during this time of when I was making \$136k a year. And that was a huge identity uplevel. It was very terrifying. I know we talk about changing pricing. I just knew where I was going and the type of clients I wanted to bring in. I needed to make a really big change, so that was a big money move that I made.

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I also broke the time-and-money relationship permanently. I just became a living, breathing equation. And as you're listening to this, we actually have a... It's so funny. I wrote these notes almost a year ago, but as you're listening to this, we have a seven-day challenge that will be running maybe this week. I don't know. As you're listening to this, but you can sign up for it for \$33, and it is called The Equation.

And this is all about how do you start to think about your life and about your goals as something bigger than, "Oh, I want to make more money, just more, more, more," or, "I want to do these cool things." Okay, well, what is the whole equation of what you're trying to create with your life? What are the skills you want to develop? How do you want to feel? What role do you want your marriage to play in your life and your parenting? And how much time do you want to spend working versus not working? And when you create this equation, I really feel like it's hard to lose yourself, and it's hard to lose the plot.

And in this phase of business, I did that. I broke the time-and-money relationship. I was no longer willing to trade dollars for hours, and I stopped thinking about it like that. And that was a really big shift that led me to go right from \$10k a month more to about averaging \$24k a month. So that was about \$289k per year.

And in that phase, what did I do? I automated monthly investments. So I was investing kind of here and there, but I started automating monthly investments of about \$1500 a month. I started doing basically whatever I wanted. I realized, and I had gotten to this trust with myself and money where I realized like, "Okay, you want to go to Japan business class? All right, let's do it." Let's do it. We're doing it. And then once the decision was made, it's like, "Click, click, click." You allow your brain the freedom to say, "Oh, okay, now we're doing this. Your job is to just figure out the solution to the money piece of it." And your brain, when you set it free, when you stop playing to protect yourself from worst-case scenario and instead say,

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"Okay, we're going towards everything that we desire." We're going towards everything that we are working towards in our future self. We're going to make every decision trusting that is the future that we're going to have. You give your brain carte blanche to go all in on problem-solving for it.

And sometimes the problem-solving looks like just being so trusting that you are that type of person that it really looks like magic and manifesting because people are like, "Oh, what? You're taking your whole family business class to Japan? That's fun. I want to do that. How can you do that?" "Oh, you want coaching?" Boom. And then the flight is paid for, right?

And so whether you're a coach or not, it doesn't matter. I want you to see how you can begin to develop this trust. And it happens over time. Notice I'm so trusting now because I invested automatically when I wasn't sure that I did. I had invested more money than was logical to invest in mentors, and I had proved to myself that I could go all in on it and make it work. I wasn't doing those investments to be like, "Okay, cool, I paid the money, so I'm entitled to the result."

It was like I just was proving to myself time and time again that I could trust myself, that I believed in myself, that we were going all in, and that I was a long-term player in this game and that there was no amount of obstacles or failures or mistakes that I could make that was going to make me back off on a dream, ever. And that type of trust just is something that's hard to break.

So I gave raises to all my team members. I brought on new team members. I automated donations. I began to sponsor more people. I began to sponsor my clients anytime they were looking for a sponsor. I also gave myself a raise at \$7200 a month, which was a huge raise for me because up until that point, I was still not paying myself very much. And I tripled my price again in a different way.

So I had tripled my price in one-on-one, and then in this year, I had tripled my price in my mastermind. So that was at a \$24k months. And then finally,

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this year, we did close to \$400k. And spent about \$20k on the best retreat house in Costa Rica. I mentioned that this was the time when... I mentioned it before, but I guess it was more at this phase that I spent \$30k on business class tickets to Japan. I hired more specific mentorship. I shifted to net worth goals and giving goals over just earnings goals. I used to just be like, "Okay, and now it's for a million." And yes, I know that I'm going to have a million-dollar year, and I'm just less worried about that. I'm more like, "Oh, I want to have a million-dollar net worth."

That was something that me and my husband hit this year collectively, which was super fun. Giving goals. It's what money is for to me. So I set some giving goals, sponsored a girl in Kenya, my little Jane, and am able to send her to school and pay for her books and her uniforms and all her school tuitions and everything. And just reminds me, right, what is the point of all of this? This is why money is fun.

I started playing with the limit does not exist goals. So instead of just setting goals that were super concrete, I was like, "What if the limit didn't exist?" and started playing with some in the quantum and letting go of the control of the math so much. I deepened my obsession with the product of what I'm selling.

I invested more in my creative consultant, Ashley, and her vision, and letting her play and dream bigger to really make this space something that is different than anything on the marketplace, right? We created and rebranded to The Most Interesting Women in the World. And a lot of that was in line with undersmosttanding that this next money level is not about a math problem. This is about a deepening. This is about becoming someone who is not copying a system out there. And really, that is, I believe, what is going to create those \$83k months, those \$100k months, right? Which will equal the first million-dollar year.

But in that \$40 to \$50k months, I re-questioned my mission and rebranded accordingly. So we are not the answer. Who am I? That is not something

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that is fixed. It's just so important for you to be constantly auditing yourself. If you want to be making more money, you can't be the same person and think the same thoughts and create different results. It doesn't math like that, right? You have to question and evolve. And I am a living, breathing equation. I am the algorithm. I am infinite possibility. And when I define myself so completely, I miss out on all of the other possibilities.

So this is what I have for you today. I cannot wait to do another follow-up episode to this, where we're talking about those \$100k months and what I thought and did differently in that season. You know, it might be in a couple of weeks. We'll see when we follow up on this. But I hope that this was useful to you as you are listening to this.

I am in Argentina with my family, also living the life that money has provided for me, and that these ways of thinking and this way of moving, and to not be so attached to money, to remember it's supposed to go out. And yes, there are a lot of ways that we can do things on our own, and it's slower, and you can do it that way. But just why? It's less fun.

I'm always thinking about, why would I not pay for the team around me of experts? I just joined a gym and Lifetime gym, and it's just the best gym around, and I love it so much because the people there are just like experts. And I'm like, "Yeah, like this guy is pushing me harder than I would have ever pushed me in this kickboxing class." And I pushed myself pretty hard.

So just to remember, yes, there are a million ways to do it, and there's no right way to do it. But to me, how can we make it the most fun? How can we make it feel the most like ourselves? And how can we remember that we are a living, breathing equation?

Remember, you can get inside of The Equation for \$33. You can get inside of this challenge so you can start to see like, what are the math pieces that I'm missing towards having the next level in each of my money games? But

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this challenge is not even just about money. It's about the whole equation about your time and about who you are becoming in this season of life. Have a beautiful day. We'll see you next week.

That's it for today's episode of *Fun Money*. But if your brain is buzzing and you want more, come hang out with me over on Instagram, @JessMcKinleyUyeno or visit us at FunMoneyPod.com because that's where the real magic happens. Until next time, stay bold, stay interesting, and for the love of God, go do something fun with your money!