

Suze Orman

“Being rich is one thing, but being financially free is another.”

Born in Chicago, in 1951, this daughter of working-class Russian Jewish immigrants has become one of the world’s most well-known and popular financial advisors. Suze Orman was born with a severe speech impediment. So bad was her speech that it affected her reading ability. In elementary school, children were seated according to their reading scores. While Suze’s (born Susan) friends who could read well and got superior grades sat in the front of the room, she was placed at the rear, further hampering her grades. Fortunately she scored high marks in Math and Science. This would prove to help her later in life.

At age thirteen, she tells the story of watching her father rush into a burning building to retrieve his cash register. As he dropped the burning hot machine, she watched the skin from his arms and chest fall off with it. The lesson of the importance of money stuck with her. She dropped out of college because of her learning disability in English and traveled cross country to California, where she secured a job as a waitress in a bakery in Berkeley, earning \$400 a week.

Suze had dreams, though. She dreamed of owning her own hot-tub and spa next to a restaurant she would own in Berkeley. As she shared her vision with her most loyal customers one day, a friend handed her a no-interest loan for \$2,000, to be paid back in ten years. As other customers contributed over the next few months, she amassed \$50,000 and began fulfilling her dream.

Suze had no knowledge about investing, so she took the money to a brokerage firm and it was put into the volatile Oil Market. The first few weeks she saw a 10 percent gain, but it quickly turned around and she lost all of her investment. Devastated she panicked over how to pay off her investors. Eventually the brokerage firm took responsibility for the failure to secure her money, but it started her to question whether she could do a better job with her own money than paying someone else to do it poorly.

First she secured a job with the same brokerage, but disagreeing with their business practices, she soon started her own financial investment firm. Now with her own office, The Suze Orman Financial Group was begun. Now she was making money on her own and investing for others with her growing knowledge of financial markets. Everything seemed to be going Suze’s way until the day she showed up for work and found out that all of her records and money had been stolen by a former employee and business partner. Computer files, software, client records and contact information were all taken from her in the middle of the night. Once again she found herself broke and destitute.

She tells the story of going to a restaurant and watching a waitress carrying on her duties with great personal joy. It reminded her of her days in the Berkeley bakery.

The happiness of the young woman touched her and made her re-think her values. She studied religious thought and went inside herself to find her spiritual home. She realized that God had a purpose for her life.

She discovered a spiritual side of success and financial freedom. She felt that all that had happened in her life was a gift that she was to be grateful for, rather than embittered. "The lesson I learned was that my attitude toward money had made me poor and that with that attitude no amount of money could have made me rich. Money doesn't bring courage, I learned. It's the other way around. Once I took the lesson to heart, I began to rebuild my life." Her spiritual side of finances influenced her advice to her clients. She told them to get out of debt, avoid expensive purchases and free themselves from the use of credit cards (she only keeps two cards herself).

This is the message of her best-selling books: *You've Earned It - Don't Lose It*, *Nine Steps to Financial Freedom*, *The Courage to be Rich*, *The Laws of Money*, *The Lessons of Life and The Money Book for the Young*, *Fabulous and Broke*. Suze's popularity boosted her into filming her own PBS specials, appearances on Oprah, articles in *Self* magazine and eventually her own Emmy Award winning television show on CNBC cable network. She has amassed a fortune and developed a financial organization pulling in over a million dollars annually.

Her humility in the midst of her success remains intact with her. She still lives in a home in Berkeley with apartments in New York and Florida. She eats out only twice a week, cooks at home most days, donates 25% of her annual proceeds to charity and still sends money to her mother. Suze says, "I love the feeling but am in shock about it. When my first book came out, I used to stand outside bookstores and ask friends to go in and see if the book was on sale. Of course it wasn't, most of the time, so I'd ask them to go back in and order it. Even now, I don't like to go into bookstores, don't watch myself on TV. Success is a kind of facade to me in that way."

The message in Suze's books and her television show, though, has transformed the lives of millions all over the world. Her basic message is: "People first, Money second, things third." She has survived being poor and wealthy several times in her life, but she has learned to get the maximum benefit from her spiritual wealth.

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