

Tippy Talk Show Interview: Money And Meaning

by Annie Margarita Yang

Tippy: Hello and welcome to the Tippy Talk. My name is Tippy Felzenstein and I'm here today to speak about something that we all are passionate about, and that is financial freedom or you can call it financial abundance. Either way, it's about financial literacy and knowing what you're doing and never having to worry about where your next penny is going to come from. I was thinking a lot about financial freedom and finances, which more people should really do and what I found is there are two main reasons that we're not financially free. The first one is a very good possibility that we grew up with a poverty mentality, maybe there was a lot of fighting about finances at home growing up, or maybe there was just a lot of lack, so we kind of make a decision and we're going to this poverty mentality and we make the decision that we're always going to be in poverty and so we act that out. The other one is just the lack of knowledge that we don't know what to do once we start earning. We earn \$100, we spend \$150. Or we earn \$100 and we spent \$100 and really that always leaves us to start over again with zero. That's just my little thought about it, but our guest today, Annie Yang, is actually a little bit more of an expert or a lot more of an expert than I am, and she will answer that question a lot better than I do. I'm really excited about talking to Annie Yang because we're going to talk about financial freedom and I know that it begins with financial knowledge and knowledge is power. Annie actually walks the walk that she talks about. The powerhouse behind Annie in the format that she follows is from Dave Ramsey who is definitely an expert and has got many people from debt and financial poverty into abundance and living debt free, so I'm very grateful to have any Annie Yang here today with us. My name is Tippy Felzenstein and I'd like to welcome you and thank you so much for joining us, Annie.

Annie: Hi, Tippy. Thank you for inviting me to your radio talk. Yeah, my name is Annie and I've recently started doing financial coaching around two, three months ago and I just want to share with you my story first.

Tippy: You took the words out of my mouth, so go right ahead and give us your story. But first of all before you start your story, I want everybody to realize how young you are and how brilliant, and I don't mean to just give you a compliment, but I really think that if I had a daughter that was in high school right now, I want you to mentor her. Definitely start with what happened in high school.

Annie: Okay. Let me just explain. I'm 20 years old. Yeah, I'm very very young, but when I was in high school, I decided to not go to college. I had a dream to travel the world and people were making fun of me, but I was like, "No, this is my dream, so I'm going to make it happen." After I graduated, I went on to just work in the real world. My first job, my boss paid me \$3 an hour and it was much less than

minimum wage and it's illegal, but nobody was willing to hire me full time so I was willing to take anything. I was working in that job and I saved like \$4,000 from that one and then within two years I was able to save \$12,000.

Tippy: Wow.

Annie: My last job, I was only paid like \$10 an hour. I wasn't paid a lot the full time. I was just using my resources effectively. It's not about how much you make, it's more about how you use what you already have and because I was really good at managing my money, I moved out of my parent's house on my 20th birthday and I've been taking care of myself ever since. Then I started asking other adults about their finances because I didn't know how well I would be able to take care of myself. I wanted to hear from other people's experiences and I was just really shocked to find out that there're just so many people in debts.

I talked to people and I found out that they have like a \$60,000 student loan and they're paying it off with minimum payments or a \$300,000 mortgage and it's just insane because really if you look at what net worth really is, it's how much you make minus how much you owe and then that's your net worth, right? Even though I'm 20, technically, my net worth is higher than what most people have, so it's really interesting.

Tippy: Wow, you said so many things here that I can actually talk about three hours just on what you mentioned right now. Let me ask you a few questions about what you said. You said that you moved out of your parent's house when you were in your twenties, so when was your birthday and when did you move out? Was it like two months ago or 10 months ago?

Annie: No, my birthday was in January. Right now I can't remember. Yeah, it was 10 months ago. I moved out 10 months ago.

Tippy: Okay. 10 months is substantial. Especially when you're 20, 10 months is a long time. You're still 20 years old and you still are definitely on your way. Let's start with my first question. Your first job, you made \$3 an hour and you were able to save all that money, so people are going to say, "Well, you live with your parents, you don't have any bills, you don't even have to worry about food, so it's easy for you to save." Was it easy for you to save or did you actually follow a format and you had to have the discipline to do it? Tell me how you were able to save money from \$3 an hour.

Annie: Okay. It was really difficult. I wasn't working the standard 40 hours. I was actually working 60 hours a week. I was working six days a week for 10 hours and I only had four days off a month. First of all, it was a really long time, right? Then I did pay for my own food, so I would not eat out. If someone invited me, I was like, "Oh, I'm sorry. I don't have the money to eat out with you. Maybe sometime in the future."

Then I would never get back. I didn't want to go like, "I'm really poor." But that's how it worked.

Tippy: You're saying that it was hard and then I see a really huge lesson here and there's two lessons here. Number one, like you said before, and this is something I want to retaliate. That no matter how much money you make, people are going to say, "Well, I only make \$3 an hour. There's no way I can save because my bills are twice as much as I make." But that's not true. It is hard and you do have to maybe give up a little. Like you had to give up hanging out with the people that wanted to do things that you couldn't afford, but at the end of the day, you were able to save and you were able to have that freedom to be able to move out of your parent's house at 20 without them supporting you. That's a huge lesson, number one. There's another lesson here that I really think is important. Everybody I talk to on their way to success they always have this attitude. They never felt that they are too good for the job because you're on your way to success, you take whatever it takes and you take whatever job it takes, as long as it's an honest to go job and that you get paid for because it's just a stepping stone. You weren't going to stay in a job making \$3 an hour, obviously for the rest of your life, but at that point you didn't feel like you were too good for the job because it was important for you to start getting that cash flow into your pocket. You're automatically doing those things. Did someone teach you that or was it something that you just naturally felt inclined?

Annie: Well, nobody taught me that. It was just a drive that I had because I was made fun of so much in high school, so my mentality was like, "Okay. I'm going to show you. You're going to be wrong." That's what really drove me. I can be doing things for myself. I took the comparison game and try to one up someone else, right? But that's what drove me in the beginning. Then as time went on, I was more driven by what I really wanted for myself and I stopped caring what other people thought, but that's how I started in the beginning and you're right.

There's like this issue, and it's not even in this country, but in Australia to abuse. People think, "Oh, I have a college degree. I'm too qualified to work a minimum wage job, or I don't deserve to have the small pay. I deserve better." But you have to start somewhere. Everyone starts at the bottom, but I don't think people realize that you need to gain experience, gain those skills, and you use that as a foundation to go on later on when you apply to other jobs and that's how it's done. You start from the bottom.

Tippy: Yeah, that's a powerful lesson that somehow you naturally stepped into and I've heard many people that were multimillionaires start. Some of them even started cleaning toilets if that's what it took.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Tippy: There's nothing to be ashamed off as long as you get paid for it. There's nothing to be ashamed with that. Okay. I didn't mean to cut you off. I want you to go on with your story and you moved out of your parent's house, so what did you do these tough 10 months? I know you've been very, very busy.

Annie: Oh, yeah. I've been super busy. Like not just with all the chores and everything, but I was like,

“Okay, now that my parents don’t have much of a say in what I want to do, I can actually build and live my own life because I have to live well and I get to choose whatever I wanted to do.” I started pole dancing which I quit because I injured my knee actually. I joined Toastmasters and that’s where I met [inaudible]. Let’s see. I was also part of an organization called Myanmar that was a personal development organization and they taught me to really let go my story and all the reasons why I can’t have what I want to have.

For example, I quit my job back in August and I wanted to go to Chicago in October and the reason I was giving myself is, “Oh, I don’t have the money.” Then as I was talking to people in orientation, I realized, “No, wait a minute. I do have the money. It’s just that I’m telling myself that as an excuse and I’m just not willing to pay for it.” When I realized that, I was like, “I could pay for it now” and I did and I went. There’s nothing stopping me from having anything I want. It’s all mindset really.

Tippy: Right. That’s what I was talking about, the poverty mentality. The mind that says, “I don’t have money.” You can have thousands of dollars in the bank, but if your mindset says, “I don’t have money,” you’re afraid to spend it. You’re afraid to really live your life. That was a very powerful lesson. That was one thing you did learn how to kind of work with your own thinking and what other things? I know you’ve been doing a lot of things.

Annie: Yeah, I also got that how much you make really has more to do with your self-confidence and your idea of your own self-worth than your actual skill. I mean, skills are important, but really how you think of yourself and how much you deserve to make plays a much bigger factor. When I let go of the idea that I’m worth only \$10 an hour, people were coming up to me and go like, “I want to hire you to do this” and people are coming like one, two, three and I never thought this would happen. I always had that mentality, “Oh, I’m not worth much because I don’t have a college degree,” but when I let go of that, I realized, “Oh, it’s really all about self-confidence and putting yourself out there.” That’s something I learned.

Tippy: Right. Then what about college? What did you do after you realized that you don’t need a college degree?

Annie: Well, I realized I don’t need a college degree, so I started a blog. It’s www.annieyang.nyc. I blog about finances on there and I write what I do for people so services I offer, and I’m not afraid to put myself out there, but I’m also going to college now which is funny, right?

Tippy: That’s exactly what I wanted to hear. There’s nothing wrong with going to college, but you go to college because you have a reason and a purpose and now there’s some skills that you want to sharpen, so you’re going to college for that. It’s not a random. I’m going to college for the sake of going. That’s the difference.

Annie: I have a reason, a goal, a purpose in mind for why I want to go. I want to major in finance. Most

people who major in finance, they plan to work in a banking industry or in the investment industry on Wall Street or wherever it is, but actually I want to major in finance so I can learn how to invest for my own future, and I could also teach other people about how to invest because what I really want to do is become a financial coach. The purpose of going to college is to get education. I don't necessarily think that purpose of it is to get a job.

Tippy: Huge difference because I have to tell you that the rate of people that graduate college and are not getting jobs is growing every single year and I think it's exactly that because now that you're registered to college, you've been to a few years out of school, you have a very good idea of where you want to go and now you decided, "Yes, I do need to be to college," but it's not because you get out of school, you just go to college. That's what you do, so there's a lot more drive to that. Besides going to college you want to be a financial coach. What do you want to teach people? What do you want to tell people? What is it that you're passionate about? Why do you want to be a financial coach?

Annie: There are a lot of people out there in their professional world who are having quarter-life or midlife crises and they just wake up and they feel like, "No, this is not the life I wanted. Why am I stuck at a job I'm miserable at?" Then they can't quit because they have so many commitments that they need to make. They have children, they have a spouse, they have bills to pay, they have rent, they have their student loan debt, they have a mortgage to pay, and so they can't just drop what they're doing now to pursue their dreams, right? But if they just learn good financial principles and habits then they can slowly build that life that they want. They can get rid of all their jobs. They can stop worrying about paying the bills because they know it will be taken care of every month no matter what and they can use their energy to focus on how they can really provide their own value and their contribution to the world like their life purpose. Not just routine job where they just go to everyday to make money.

Tippy: Right. In your words and I'm going to read what you wrote is you said, "I realized other people did not know good financial principles. I want other people to have the foundation I have so then they have the freedom to live how they want to instead of using their energy worrying about paying the bills." That's really powerful too. How are you teaching people and if I came to you, I know that you're working with Dave Ramsey and he definitely has the program that helps you go through the steps, but if I were to come to you and you wanted to teach me something that would really matter, something small, what would be the first thing that you would tell me to do?

Annie: The first thing before anything else I would tell you to do is to save right off the top of your income: 10%. The moment you get your paycheck, I want you to save 10% of it, and put it into your savings account.

Even though you have stuff to pay and that money could have gone to paying your debts or whatever, you need to pay yourself first because when you do that, you realize, okay, I respect myself, I respect my financial life, and my future because you're saving for the future, and that's what it is. When you

have a good emergency fund saved up, you just start feeling more at peace knowing that everything will be fine. If an emergency comes up like a car accident, which is something I got into just six weeks ago, you know you're able to pay for it or if you miss work, you know that you can use that money to just buy as you're out of work.

Tippy: Right. As opposed to what happened to me when I had a car accident. They came into my house and took all my furniture and I lost my house and I ended up out on the street with nothing. Yeah, knowing that and if I would have done what you're saying right now to do, then even though I was in an accident, I was in bed for a long time, I would have had enough where I would not have had to go through being kicked out of my house and not being able to pay rent. Really not even being able to buy food, because when you're paralyzed, you can't buy anything. Obviously.

Annie: Wow, how did it feel at that time?

Tippy: I wasn't very happy. It wasn't the happiest time of my life, but it really is important to do exactly what you said. Take 10% off the top, pretend you're making 10% less, and save that either for a future investment or a future rainy day or whatever it is that you might need. Your website, you said was www.annieyang.nyc. But Annie Yang can be spelled a few different ways. We're talking about A-N-N-I-E-Y-A-N-G, right?

Annie: Correct. That's my name.

Tippy: That's how you spell it. Okay. If you want to hear more about what Annie has to say and trust me, you want to hear it, that's the website you go to. I will put the link right below here if you're listening to this online, but if you're not, then you just go to annieyang.com and you'll get that information. There's something else that you're doing that I'm fascinated with and that is a book that you're writing and I love books. That's one of my passions. One of my few things that I'm really passionate about. Do you have a title for the book?

Annie: Yes, it's called Money and Meaning: How You Can Have the Life and the Money You Want.

Tippy: I love it. You're writing a book. You're giving workshops that David Ramsey. You're going to college. How do you manage to do all that and still sit here and talk to me and not be busy doing that?

Annie: I really use my calendar effectively. I find that if it's not on my calendar, it doesn't get done. I really look at my calendar and see okay, so there's a free time plot over there. Let me just put it in there and I'm not going to double book or anything. I also try to give myself enough time to travel to where I'm going to go to the next place, so I don't want to rush, but then obviously sometimes I just get so exhausted. I have to say, "I'm sorry but I need to cancel" because if I don't take care of my own well-being, I can't be as much help that I can be. I can't add as much value as I can.

Tippy: Basically, it's time management and it's also knowing that it comes a point where you really do

have to take care of yourself because you can't overdo it. At the end of the day, your health is the most important thing obviously.

Annie: That's right. Yeah, actually also what I do to manage all this is just once a month I travel somewhere else.

I find that when I go like, "Sorry, I can't do this on that day because I'm going to be out of town and I won't be picking up phone calls." Then I find that people don't text me, they don't call me, they don't bother me, so it's my safe haven. When I travel, I'm really in the present experiencing something new and I'm not bothered by anyone and that's what I do.

Tippy: That's a great escape because everybody needs that. I have people that say, "Okay, I have my Saturdays off. Everybody knows that my Saturday that's my holiday. Nobody calls me, nobody texts me. It's my safe haven." Traveling is a great way to do it and you did mention when we started talking that one of the things you wanted to do, and the reason you didn't go to college is because you wanted to travel all over the world. How did travel work out? Tell me about that.

Annie: Well, I did not travel the world. I decided if I wanted to have my dreams come true, I should just start small. That's with anything you want to do. You start small and then you grow from there. In January, my friend was asking me, "Well, did you start traveling yet?" And I told him, "No." Then he said, "So when are you going to start?" I felt really bad, so that weekend I just left. I went to Philadelphia. I bought an \$18 bound trip bus ticket and I spent the day there and I realized, "Man, there's just so much fun. I'm meeting new people." People in different cities, they really have different attitudes towards life. When I travel, I realized, oh, the New York minute and the rush mentality here isn't everywhere. I started in Philadelphia then I went to Columbus, Ohio for a dance competition but I went to watch, but it was also a chance to travel, and then I went to Boston. I went to Chicago last month. Actually, right now I'm in Boston again.

Tippy: Oh, that's awesome.

Annie: I'm in Boston right now. I'm from New York.

Tippy: Right. I think that's another really key point is if you want to do something, if you want to make \$1,000,000, earn \$10 and then another \$10 you don't have to step in and get \$1,000,000 the first day. But you can keep that as your destination eventually, but you don't have to end there. People think that they have to jump from step one to step 10. It doesn't work that way. It goes one step at a time and I think that's really important lessons to learn there.

Annie: It's like anything in your financial life, you start small. You start with a \$10 savings fund, right? Yesterday I was actually in a Zumba class and there's this dance instructor. She's just amazing and the class was filled with 60 people and the maximum capacity for a studio was only 30. It was over the limit. At the end of the class, I was talking to her and I was like, "Man, this is great. You got 60 people to

show up.” Outside of college in the real world, it’s hard to get even one person to show up at your class. How did you do it? She said, “Well, I didn’t start this year. I started last year and I started with only three people.” Three people is all she started with and then by the end of the year, she did such a great job that people were talking about it and she had 20 people. Now that it’s the beginning of the semester, she has 60 people coming to her class and it’s just so amazing. You grow from there. That’s the key thing to start. If you don’t start, you’re never going to get anywhere, right?

Tippy: Exactly. Take the step. It doesn’t really matter how big or how small. If you start and you’re good, people are going to end up showing up.

Annie: Yeah, that’s right.

Tippy: That sounds really great, Annie. I know that you’re going to be doing a lot more than you’re doing, but I think you already doing a lot.

With the last few minutes that we have, if you want to go through and kind of give us an idea of what you went through in terms of finances. You start working first, you save how much, and how did that spiral for you because you said you ended up with \$12,000? I know it didn’t happen overnight.

Annie: Before the first full time job, I was actually working as a cashier at ShopRite and over there I saved \$1,000 because that’s just a really small, basic emergency fund, so I did it there. It took me two months to save up that much and then after that I quit and I started doing massages. That’s the full time job I had \$3 an hour. If guys are paying \$60 an hour to get a massage and I was getting paid \$3 an hour for the work I was doing. My boss is really [inaudible] but it’s okay I got the skill. I worked there for like 6 to 8 months. I saved \$4,000 from that one. How did I do it? Well, the first thing I did was like I said, I paid myself first. Right off of that. Instead of 10%, I saved 50% of what I made, so I only was able to live on 50% of what I lived on. Then what happened after that? I quit because I just couldn’t take the exhausting working anymore and then I started selling dance clothes online, so I would buy belly dance clothes from China and I started selling them on eBay. I made some money from there like \$1,000. It’s not that much. What did I do? I started working at a small mom and pop grocery store in my neighborhood and I saved \$3,000 from that one. There I have like \$6,000 to \$7,000 and at that point I quit in December. It’s only a year ago and then I got a new job working with a bookkeeper after that for one month. One month into my job I had \$7,000 to \$8,000. I was like, “Okay, now I have enough money to move out of my parent’s house because I have enough money to do it.” The rent was only \$650 so I had a couple months’ worth of savings considered by then. I did that and then I kept working at that job until August. By then I saved \$4,000, so it was around \$10,000 I had.

Well, I go to college, right, and they give you some grant money. My Pell grant and my TAPS gave me \$2,500. You add that in I have \$12,500 total. That’s how it was done.

Tippy: All right. Very simple spiral, so you basically double it and double that. Were you planning to do

any investing with it?

Annie: Yeah, let me explain to you what steps are. The first step is saving \$1,000 for your emergency fund. The second step is to pay off all your debt. The third step is to save six months to one year's worth of savings, which is what I did and the fourth step is to start investing for retirement. Recently, I just opened a Roth IRA and that's after tax dollars. It will grow and then when I withdraw money, I'm not going to pay taxes on it which is a great thing. I just opened it. I didn't start investing yet because I need to learn how to invest. That's why I'm going to school, but I'm going to start seeing a financial advisor next week and he's going to walk me through how to do it.

Tippy: Well, it definitely sounds like you are on the right path and it definitely sounds like you can help a lot of people and being financially free is one of those worries that you're saying that people really don't have to have if they're smart with their money rather than just randomly shop and randomly make money and randomly spend money. With the few seconds that we have left, tell us where you are and what you're doing and how we can join you or if somebody wants to work with you, if somebody wants to do something, where do they go besides your website? What do you have available right now cooking to help people? I know that that's your passion.

Annie: Okay. The main thing I have right now is I already host a financial peace university class in Long Island every Wednesday, but I'm going to host one in Bay Ridge every Tuesday starting in January and it's considerably cheap. It's only \$119 for nine weeks.

That makes it \$10 to \$12 a week and that's for nine evening classes. What is that? That's \$8 an hour, right? It's really good. It's beneficial. You'll learn everything that I learned to get to where I am today. This will be at 9020 3rd Avenue starting on January 19th 2016 at 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and you can learn more about it at www.bayhrichfpu.com and that's where you can sign up for the class.

Tippy: Beautiful. If they go to your website also, do you have that information over there obviously, right?

Annie: Yeah, it includes what you learn in every lesson, where it is, what my contact info is, a preview of what the class would be like. Everything you would need to know about the class.

Tippy: Wow, okay. Great. Any last word that you would like to say before we wind up?

Annie: I would like to say that you can do it if you really set your mind to becoming financially free and you set that as your goal every day you take a small step toward it. You can actually get to where you want to be in your life. That's what I want to say.

Tippy: Wow, that sounds so promising and for all those people who think that they are so much dead and they can't handle, what you're saying is if they take it a step by step program and they follow it, then they can actually become financially free to a place, come to a corner where they will never have to worry about money again. Is that what you're saying?

Annie: Yes, that's right.

Tippy: What more can they ask for, right? What can they ask for other than being financially free so that you can do whatever you want with your life? You can travel, you can have fun, you can do so many different things without having to worry. Okay, where's my next penny going to come from? That's very big, Annie. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

I will be looking forward to your book: Money and Meaning. Definitely want to hear more about that. When you get ready to publish it and you get ready to talk about it, definitely let us know and we'll follow up so that people can find out about your book and all that stuff that you're planning to do. I also want to follow up next year and see how things are going in the next year. Where you are in the next level? That sounds really good and I'm very excited for you and thank you so much for joining us here on Tippy Talk. My name is Tippy Felzenstein and I invite you to come and listen. This is going to be archived so you can come and listen to the show anytime that you want. Once again, thank you, Annie. Have a wonderful day and we look forward to learning more stuff from you.

Annie: Thanks for inviting me, Tippy. Thank you.

Tippy: Bye.

Transcribed by Maureen Wawira

www.AnnieMargaritaYang.com