

Trouble Talking to Kids About Money? Try This Book Instead

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A new book hopes to impart important money lessons in just a few words and pictures

Talking to your kids about money is never easy. We have so many financial taboos and insecurities that many parents would rather skip it—just like their parents likely did with them. If that sounds like you, maybe a new easy-to-digest money guide written for teens can be part of your answer.



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As a parent, you have to do something.

Kids today will come of age and ultimately retire in a vastly less secure financial world. Their keys to long-term success will have little to do with the traditional pensions and Social Security benefits that may be a big part of your own retirement calculus. For them, saving early and building their own safety net is the only sure solution.

Most parents get that. After all, adults have seen first-hand the long-running switch from defined benefit to defined contribution plans that took flight in the 1980s. Yet only in the last 15 years have we really begun to grasp how much this change has [undermined](#) retirement security. Now, more parents are having [the money talk](#) with their kids. Still, many say they find it easier to talk about [sex or drugs](#) than finances.

The big challenge of our day, as it relates to the financial security of young people, is getting them thinking about their financial future now while they have 40 or 50 years to let their savings compound. But saving is only one piece of the puzzle. Young people need to protect their identity and their credit score—two relatively recent considerations. Many of them are also committed to making a difference through giving, which is an uplifting trait of younger generations. Yet they are prone to scams and don't know how to vet a charity.

In *OMG: The Official Money Guide for Teenagers*, authors **Susan and Michael Beacham** tackle these and other basics in a breezy, colorful, cleverly illustrated booklet meant to hold a teen's attention. The whole thing can be read in an hour. I'm not convinced the YouTube generation will latch on to any written material on this subject. And while the authors do a nice job of keeping things simple, they just can't avoid eye-glazing terms like "liquidity" and "principal."

But they make a solid effort to hold a teen's interest through a handful of "awkward money moments," which illustrate how poor money management can lead to embarrassing outcomes like their debit card being declined in front of friends or having to wear last year's team uniform because they spent all their money at the mall. "Kids are very social and money is a big part of that social experience," says Susan Beacham. "No teen wants to feel awkward, which is why we chose this word. If they read nothing else but these segments they will be ahead of the game."

The Beachams are co-founders of Money Savvy Generation, a youth financial education website. They have a long history in personal finance and created the [Money Savvy Pig](#), a

bank with separate compartments for saving, spending, donating, and investing. In *OMG*, they tackle budgets, saving, investing, plastic, identity theft, giving, and insurance.

A new money guide for young people seems to pop up every few years. So it's not like this hasn't been tried before. Earlier titles include *Money Sense for Kids* from Barron's and *The Everything Kids Money Book* by Brette McWhorter Sember. But most often this subject is geared at parents, offering ways to teach their kids about money. [Dave Ramsey's *Smart Money Smart Kids*](#) came out last spring and due out early next year is *The Opposite of Spoiled: Raising Kids Who are Grounded, Generous and Smart About Money* from New York Times personal finance columnist [Ron Lieber](#).

In a nod to how tough it can be to get teens to read a book about money, Beacham suggests a parent or grandparent ask them to read *OMG*, and offer them an incentive like a gift card after completing the chapter on "ways to pay" or a cash bonus after reading the chapter on budgets and setting one up. "Make reading the book a bit like a treasure hunt," she says. That just might make having the money talk easier too.

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