

My Savings War

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I'm fighting a war on "savings." Not savings the concept, but "savings" the word: I'm fighting to get it back, back from all the marketing and advertising people who have stolen it from us.

Raise your hand if you believe that saving and savings are good. Now wave at everyone who is looking at you and wondering why you raised your hand while reading from your computer (or mobile device or whatever you're using). You may look silly with your hand raised, but the point here is that everyone believes that saving and savings are good and so if everyone else reading this participated as well as you, you wouldn't be the only one looking silly right now.

Now, raise your hand if you believe that you can save money when buying things, like perhaps due to a sale a store is having. If you're again looking silly with your hand raised, this time I'm hoping you're not in good company. But take heart: untold amounts of money have been spent by marketers and advertisers who want you to believe that you can save money when buying things. Unfortunately, this leaves you...wait for it...looking silly.

Here's the deal: we have all been taught that saving and savings are good things; these are values that are instilled in us. And saving and savings--real saving and real savings--**are** good things! Now, let's talk about spending: no, the point isn't that spending is, by contrast with saving, bad. Spending is necessary, at least for the vast majority of us. What spending always is, however, is **the complete opposite of saving!** So: if go into a store and come out with stuff, you have **spent** money and you have **not** saved money. What's wrong with that? In and of itself, nothing: as I said, spending is necessary. But what's good about spending? Well, when you're buying things you **need**, that's a good thing (or at least, if you're able to afford the necessities of your life, that's a good thing). But...well, the truth for many of us is that we don't actually **need** most of what we buy. Now, we all know that marketers and advertisers work to convince us that we need things we really don't need and they're good at this. But there's always something there we can argue against. So you know what an even better strategy for them is? Divert our attention away from that issue and instead focus on something we all believe in: saving money! So that's exactly what they do: they tell us how much we can "save" by buying from them during whatever sales promotion it is they're doing. And we get all excited because we get what we want (whatever they're selling)**and** we get to "save" (which we value). It's subtle--and brilliant.

It's brilliant because it works. And it works so well that they've managed to steal "savings" from us and completely redefine it. Take a look the last paragraph of this **ABC News article** and you'll see an example (I tried to post a comment about this subject to this article but I guess it wasn't approved; well, fine: I'll just include a link to their article here in my blog post instead).

You may think how we define "savings" is mere semantics and a trivial issue but it's not: because of the fact that we value savings, it's psychologically important for us to define it properly. So let's take "savings" back--and lets use it to refer to holding onto our money, not spending it.