

[Guest Post] Freedom Fighter Interview #28 - Nick True

Today we have Nick True, a Mechanical Engineer, and a self proclaimed tightwad. He got married young, at 20 years old, and then proceeded to ruin his honeymoon. But he and his wife got through this, and learned core beliefs and principals that now guide their financial life. I hope you enjoy the interview below.

Nick, the floor is yours...



Let's Get This Out Of The Way First

I've found it's best to just start off standing on stage, in nothing but my underwear. It lets you get to know the real me, and forces me to come out from behind the bushes.

In other words, I want to start off with my biggest financial mistake.

So here goes nothin...

I ruined my honeymoon.

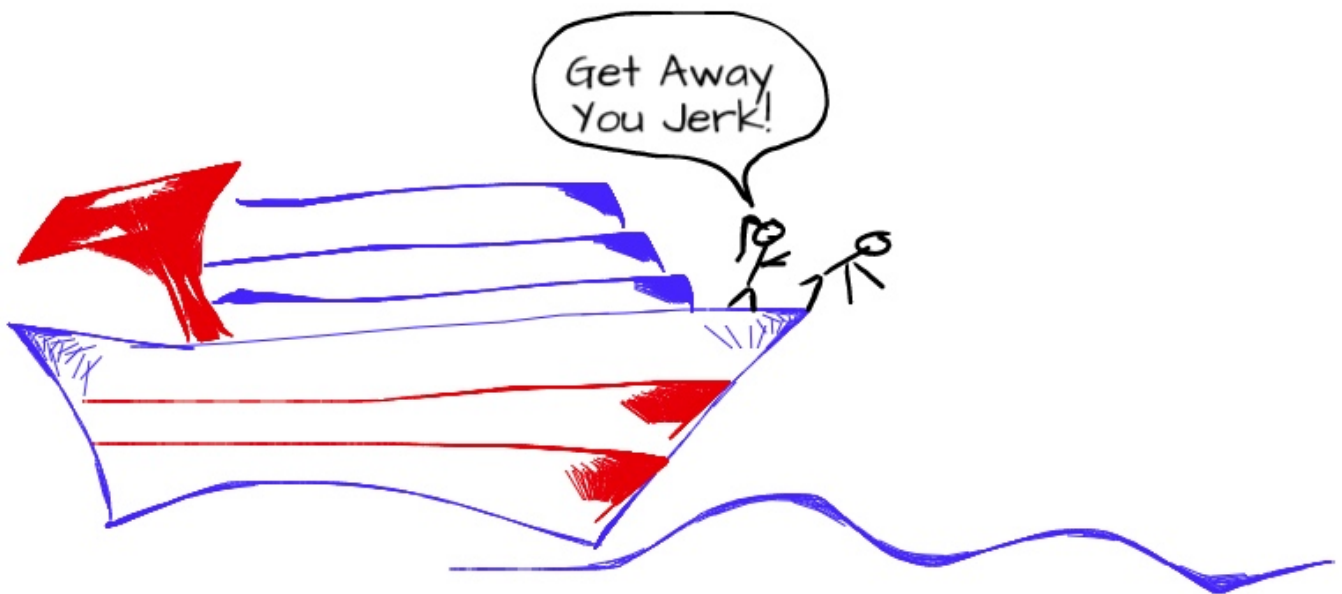
Not like, "oh, haha, funny, cute story ruined." I'm talking, miserable, fighting 80% of the time, ignoring each other, wondering what we'd gotten ourselves into ruined. See, my wife and I went on a cruise for our honeymoon and I naively thought that cruises were "all-inclusive."

They are not.

Long story short, between paying for a drink package (so that we could drink something other than water), tipping literally everyone on board, and paying for 2 excursions, we spent a lot more money than I had ever anticipated. And keep in mind, my wife and I were very young I was 20, she was 23. We didn't have much money. I still had one year left in college and my wife was starting graduate school a few weeks after we got back from the cruise.

This made me start stressing about everything. I knew that money was going to be extremely tight during our first year of marriage, so anything that deviated from my perfect little financial plan freaked me out. The problem is that I started taking it out on my beautiful bride.

And I'm surprised she didn't do this.



I was the complete opposite of Prince Charming. I moped, complained, argued, and genuinely tried to not have a good time because I was so mad and frustrated by the money. A fun-sucker is the best way I know to describe it. And it all happened because I let a few hundred dollars ruin what should have been one of the happiest weeks of my life.

I know. I was an idiot.

But it's real, it happened, and it's the truth.

What We Learned And How We Fight For Freedom

I wrote an article about this over on my own blog, [you can check out here](#). But I want to explain why I'm sharing this story.

I believe fighting for financial freedom requires knowing yourself. And I learned something about myself that week that has forever shaped the way I approach money.

My wife and I learned how deeply ingrained planning is to my personality.

The thing is, we actually had the money to pay for all of that extra stuff on the cruise. It wasn't spending the money that caused me to freak out. It was *not planning* to spend the money that caused it.

I'm a consummate planner and long-term thinker. It's deeply ingrained in my nature. So now, we plan for this.

My wife and I set aside a few hundred dollars every single month for "unexpected expenses." To some people that may be way more than the typical \$50 - \$100 they set aside for the unexpected. But to combat my stress level, we've found that having more in "unexpected" keeps us happier, healthier, and better overall.

If we don't need the money at the end of the month, we can just put it in savings. No harm no foul. This one little thing has drastically improved my stress level about money over the past two years.

Which brings me to 3 core things that I believe about money. And these are the things that drive what I write about [on my blog](#).

1. Money is deeply emotional – not rational
2. Self-Awareness is extremely important – You must know how you personally think about money
3. Financial Freedom is a choice (more on that one in a bit)

Yes, money is numbers, which means math, which means logic. I get it.

I'm [an engineer](#), after all, I understand logic.

But money has a funny way of not being logical at all. It's much more about emotions and that's where people get in trouble. Which is why I bring up my second point about self-awareness. Everyone deals with money differently and everyone has different tendencies. I'm not going to push one tendency over the other. The important thing is to understand your own tendencies. Then you can combat the ones that need fighting and leverage the ones that will help you move forward.

And now that you understand how I think about money, here are some other things you should know.

About Me

My name is Nick True, I'm 23 years old, and I live with my beautiful wife, dog, and 2 cats in Chattanooga TN. I have a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and currently work in the Power Industry. My wife has 1 year left in Physical Therapy school and we're very excited for her to graduate in May 2017 (this is important to the story).

I'm a True Tightwad and have a blog over at truetightwad.com

I define being a tightwad as someone who puts off what they don't need now, in order to get what they truly want later. It's not about being cheap. It's about recognizing the difference between *kinda wants* and *really wants* and then sacrificing the *kinda* for the *really*.

I believe in cutting ruthlessly the things you don't really care about and spending lavishly on the things you do.

What Put Me On The Freedom Fighter Path

The best financial decision I ever made was listening to my dad.

While my dad doesn't know much about options trading, special tricks to maximize your ARM, alternative real-estate investments, or even credit card sign-up bonus churning, he's the hardest working guy I know.

My dad never went to college and everything he knows is completely self-taught. He built his very first house 20 years ago when I was three and my parents still live there today. After building that house, he decided he liked it so much he'd start doing it for a living.

He currently runs a successful custom home building company and has for the past 20 years. He survived the housing market crash and has done extremely well for himself. And he did it through extreme hard work.

My parents tried to teach me about money when they could, but the best thing my dad ever taught me was that if you want something you're going to have to work for it. I remember pulling weeds in the garden as a young boy on Saturday mornings while my friends were playing. I remember building retaining walls during evenings after school while my buddies went to the movies. I remember spending entire Saturdays spreading mulch, moving dirt, and cutting trees.

And I remember complaining a lot.

But now I recognize it's the greatest gift my Dad could've given me.

He taught me the value of hard work and that has forever shaped my financial future.

My dad chose his financial freedom by working for himself in a job that he loves. Now, I'm trying to do the same.

Where I Am Currently

When it comes to money my wife and I absolutely love [YNAB](#) (You Need A Budget). We use it to budget and track all of our expenses. I also just recently started using [Personal Capital](#) to track our investments, thanks to GYFG!

We've spent the past two years of our marriage really focusing on getting our expenses down and living frugally. But in the very near future, our efforts will begin turning to maximizing our income streams for [wealth generation](#).

Obviously, we've already started some of that through my freelance work via the blog, but we will begin focusing more and more on this.

I currently work for an engineering firm between 7 am-ish and 5 pm-ish. I travel a lot for this job which keeps me in the car and on planes fairly often, where I listen to tons of podcasts. My favorite right now are The Fizzle Show, Unemployable, and StartupCamp.

When I'm not at work, I'm working on my own blog and freelance writing. I'm a morning person by nature and get up early. A typical day looks like work from 7am - 5pm, dinner with Hanna, then blog from 7pm - Midnight. Saturdays and Sundays I can get another 12 - 20 hours in on the blog. It works out well right now because my wife is in graduate school and she spends even more time studying than I do working on the blog.

This isn't the long term plan, though.

Where We Are Going

My definition of [financial freedom](#) is about reaching a place where you aren't stressed about money and feel at peace. It's slightly different from [financial independence](#). Which I believe has more to do with not needing a job.

But for me, financial freedom means doing work that I love while providing a desirable income/lifestyle for my family. Our freedom number is significantly [lower than GYFG's](#), but part of that is due to living in a very low-cost area. All of the California techies would throw up if they realized how much house you can get out here for only \$200K.

I think our freedom number will fluctuate as we get older, but for now, it's around \$2.5M (not accounting for inflation).

But like I said, Financial Freedom is much more about lifestyle to us. So here's what that looks like in the very near future.

After my wife graduates, we are planning to execute a few things very rapidly that set us up for a travel lifestyle over the next few years.

1. Hanna graduates from Physical Therapy school (May 2017)
2. Hanna gets licensed in multiple states to work as a physical therapist
3. Hanna gets a job with a physical therapy travel agency
4. Nick quits his corporate engineering job
5. Nick focuses full time on his blog
6. Nick ramps up his freelance work to bring in more money while working on growing his own blog
7. Nick and Hanna buy an RV
8. Nick, Hanna, the dog, and 2 cats move out of their apartment and into the RV full time
9. The family travels around to new states wherever Hanna gets a job every 13 weeks or so
10. Hanna works as a Travel PT and Nick works remotely from the RV

Basically, in the medical field, there is a high demand for traveling nurses, physical therapists, physicians etc... There are specific companies that hire therapists and then send them all over the country wherever there is an open position. Each rotation lasts 8 - 13 weeks typically, and then you're off to somewhere new.

We're taking advantage of a great opportunity in the medical field because we're young, don't have any kids, and why not.

See, I believe that financial freedom is a choice. It's not something that happens to you or something that you fall into. It's something you choose every single day. (I actually have a [free email course](#) on this).

And we are choosing financial freedom by taking advantage of travel opportunities. We don't want to wait until we've reached our freedom number to travel. We want to travel now. So I've been slowly growing my blog over the past year to start setting us up for that lifestyle.

Long term we plan to come back and settle in the southeast, get a house, have kids, etc... But by that time, I plan to have grown my business to a larger scale so that I can continue working on my own business instead of getting another corporate job. I've got plans for podcasting, creating courses, speaking, and also growing my freelance work down the road. In addition to the business, we also plan to

eventually invest in real-estate and diversify our own personal investments.

I do focus on growing our wealth through investing, saving, etc... But teaching people about money isn't just something I like, it's literally the thing I love doing more than anything else. That's why I'm working hard and focusing most of my energy on growing my business.

It's a long-term game, but I'm willing to play it. This is what financial freedom looks like to us.

Favorite Quote

I want to wrap this interview up with the quote that drives me more than any other. I'm a quote junkie and if you are too, then you've likely heard this one before, but I think it bears repeating. Personally, I have it printed out and posted beside my desk at home so I see it every day.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

- Theodore Roosevelt

To me, the best line is at the end. It's what drives me. Because even if I fail, at least I've failed while daring greatly, instead of kicking myself for never trying.

I want to be the man in the arena. And I think you should too.

So that's it! Please leave a comment below and let me know what you think.

If you'd like to check out my blog you can find me over at truetightwad.com. Or you can check out my 5-day free email course on [how to choose financial freedom](#). If you're interested, you can find that [here](#).

You can also say hi over on Twitter @nickdtrue



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I'm Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You'll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)