



The Costs of Living

Barry Schwartz

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We all value freedom, family, friends, work, education, health, and leisure-"the best things in life." But the pressure we experience to chase the dollar in order to satisfy both the demands of the bottom line and the demands of our seemingly insatiable desire to consume are eroding these best things in life. Our children now value profit centers, not sports heroes. Our educational system is fast becoming nothing more than a financial investment where students are encouraged to expend more energy on making the grade than on learning about their world. Our business leaders are turning young idealists into cynics when they cut corners and explain that "everybody's doing it." The need to achieve in our careers intrudes so greatly on our personal world that we find ourselves weighing the "costs" of enjoying friendships rather than working. In this book, psychologist Barry Schwartz unravels how market freedom has insidiously expanded its reach into domains where it does not belong. He shows how this trend developed from a misguided application of the American value of individuality and self-pursuit, and how it was aided by our turning away from the basic social institutions that once offered traditional community values. These developments have left us within an overall framework for living where worth is measured entirely by usefulness in the marketplace. The more we allow market considerations to guide our lives, the more we will continue to incur the real costs of living, among them disappointment and loneliness.

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