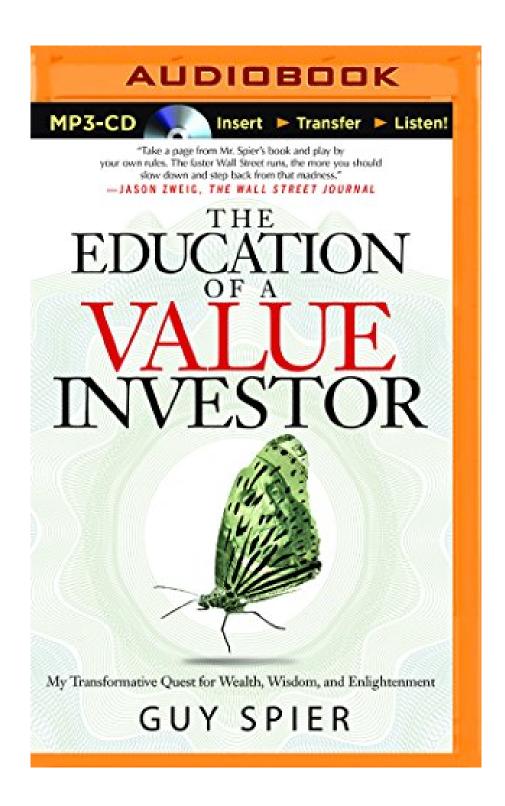


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Review

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What happens when a young Wall Street investment banker spends a small fortune to have lunch with Warren Buffett? He becomes a real value investor. In this fascinating inside story, Guy Spier details his career from Harvard MBA to hedge fund manager. But the path was not so straightforward. Spier reveals his transformation from a Gordon Gekko wannabe, driven by greed, to a sophisticated investor who enjoys success without selling his soul to the highest bidder. Spier's journey is similar to the thousands that flock to Wall Street every year with their shiny new diplomas, aiming to be King of Wall Street. Yet what Guy realized just in the nick of time was that the King really lived 1,500 miles away in Omaha, Nebraska. Spier determinedly set out to create a new career in his own way. Along the way he learned some powerful lessons which include: why the right mentors and partners are critical to long term success on Wall Street; why a topnotch education can sometimes get in the way of your success; that real learning doesn't begin until you are on your own; and how the best lessons from Warren Buffett have less to do with investing and more to do with being true to yourself. Spier also reveals some of his own winning investment strategies, detailing deals that were winners but also what he learned from deals that went south. Part memoir, part Wall Street advice, and part how-to, Guy Spier takes readers on a ride through Wall Street but more importantly provides those that want to take a different path with the insight, guidance, and inspiration they need to carve out their own definition of success.

Sales Rank: #438688 in BooksPublished on: 2015-08-18

• Formats: Audiobook, MP3 Audio, Unabridged

• Original language: English

• Number of items: 1

• Dimensions: 6.75" h x .50" w x 5.25" l,

Running time: 6 HoursBinding: MP3 CD

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Most helpful customer reviews

79 of 89 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting book, but not quite what I expected

By Andy Wallace

I am a retired financial advisor, and a long time value investor. When I ordered this book, I expected the author to share some ideas that would enhance my understanding of value investing. I guess I should have read the product description of the book posted on Amazon. That would have clued me in to the fact that this book is more of a memoir of the life and personal growth of a fallen Master of the Universe.

It was a quick read, and I enjoyed read of some of the life lessons Spier learned on his transformative quest for wealth. I have shared this book with 2 of my sons, just starting out in their careers. Spier offers some good advice that I wish I had learned early in my career. I believe my sons can learn a lot from this book, if only they'd put down their damn smart phones and pick up a book!

33 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

They may not achieve Buffett-status but they stand a good chance of beating 90% of professional investors after fees

By Steve Bradshaw

I will definitely read this book again, slowly, considering all the life changes I want to make.

This is the most honest and open account of an investor coming of age I have come across. It deals directly with a lot of the in-the-weeds difficulties of staying disciplined, setting up the factors that will prevent known psychological traps and investing boldly as a contrarian. Spier has an extremely insightful perspective on what has led to Buffett's investing prowess. In moulding himself after the legendary investor he shows how it's possible for anyone to similarly set the odds up in their favor. They may not achieve Buffett-status but they stand a good chance of beating 90% of professional investors after fees, an approach that will surely lead to considerable wealth over a lifetime.

Similar to Guy, I experienced rapture when I first read the Intelligent Investor as well as Lowenstein's biography on Buffett. While I have implemented much of the teachings in my own investing strategy over the past six years, I now wish I'd been even more fanatical. For instance, Spier has set rules for himself such as always reading primary sources first, only checking stock prices once a week, never reading sell-side research and not talking about current investments. He has also worked hard to surround himself with high-quality likeminded investing peers. Well, I plan to remedy things, starting with attending the Berkshire annual meeting this year...

What's amazing about Graham, Buffett, Pabrai, Spiers, Dremen, Klarman, Watsa, Greenblatt, Gaynor, Einhorn and all the other great value investors is that they each publicly lay out their approach in detail (usually updated quarterly or annually), they each announce their specific holdings (on 13fs each quarter) and they each consistently beat the market by a wide margin and for long periods of time. Yet despite this, value investing continues to represent a small minority of the overall fund management business and few people succeed in copying value strategies successfully.

And the irony is it's such a simple approach! Invest in high-quality businesses that you understand with wide moats and good cashflow characteristics when they're going cheap. I.e. be greedy when others are fearful and fearful when others are greedy. Most investors think they understand this already.

The problem is that many cognitive biases remnant from our days on the savanna work against us at times of great fear and great greed, preventing us from sticking to methods that work over long periods of time but often appear to be broken in real time.

That's why this book is so important. Understanding our own cognitive biases and setting up an environment which will enhance rational thinking is where the rubber hits the road and what distinguishes great investors. It's no accident that Buffett holes up in Kiewit Plaza, reads sec filings all day, trades seldom and surrounds himself with individuals like Munger, Gates and Katherine Graham. He's nailed it.

Therefore, do not take this book lightly! It gets to the heart of what makes an investor great.

44 of 53 people found the following review helpful.

Great value investing and life lessons

By Sidarta Tanu

The Education of a Value Investor by Guy Spier is a fun value investing book to read. He talks about his life, his career, and the pursuit of happiness/peacefulness. He explains how meeting and learning from Warren

Buffett and Mohnish Pabrai changes his perspective on life and makes him a better investor. He candidly talk about his failures and believe those moments are where he learn the most and shapes the person he is today. The book also covers case studies of some of his investments (such as CarMax, Farmer Mac, Tupperware, etc), including the investment thesis, the outcome, and the lesson learned. His goal is no longer to be Gordon Gekko or Warren Buffet, but to be the best version of Guy Spier that he can be.:)

Here are some of my takeaways from this book:

- Authenticity and self-awareness are keys for success
- Align interest with investor (set fair compensation structure)
- Don't live beyond our means or fall into debt
- Live by your internal scorecard (have independent mind)
- Maximizing return is not everything
- True value investor is more than just about investing (It's also a way of life)
- Keep an open mind and learn from others (think what Warren would do)
- Never do anything that will taint our reputation

Sidarta Tanu

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