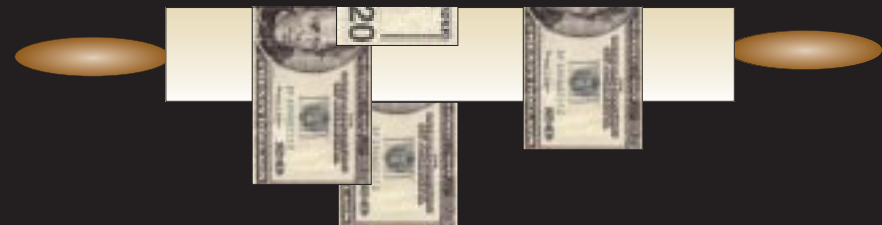


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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ISSUE THE MAKING BREAD MINI-MAG™

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Choices. Money can buy you more of them. During the holiday season, there seem to be more choices to make and more of a need for money than usual: How much to spend, what to buy, how to honor those who mean the most to you, what New Year's resolutions you'll try to keep this year. Sometimes the best choices don't involve money at all. Other times, they save you money.

This Holiday issue of the **MAKING BREAD MINI-MAG** is filled with smart choices to help you save money and spend more time with those you love. We have stories about the choices we make in our relationships, in the values we choose to teach our daughters, and in how we can best manage the stress of holiday preparations. We present new choices in the form of a little-known alternative to costly traditional health insurance plans, a job-sharing arrangement that might work for you, and a radical hair "do" that one of our columnists is trying in order to save money and to get in touch with her inner roots. Will she end up looking like her mother? Stay tuned. We hope

There may be many presents on your holiday wish list this year, and I hope that you get every one of them. But, mostly, I hope that you enjoy the presence of those you love around you this season. They're the best presents you'll ever receive.

you enjoy these chronicles of the various smart choices women around the country are making in their daily lives.

As my gift to you this season, I offer the "evergreen" below. One of the most frequently e-mailed stories on www.makingbreadmagazine.com, it tells the tale of how I learned a valuable lesson about what's really important—during the holidays and every day.

There may be many presents on your holiday wish list this year, and I hope that you get every one of them. But, mostly, I hope that you enjoy the presence of those you love around you this season. They're the best presents you'll ever receive. Happy holidays!

—Gail Harlow

How I Learned That Love and Money Are Not Two Sides of the Same Coin

You know those television commercials for a certain credit-card company where the narrator recites the cost of various activities being portrayed on screen? A typical one goes something like this: Trip to Ireland to see the place where Mom grew up—\$3,000. Lunch at the pub in her hometown—\$70. The look on Mom's face when she meets her first crush—PRICELESS.

No doubt about it: These ads are well-produced, very effective heart-tuggers, even though their consumerist message—tell someone how much you love them by spending money on them and you'll get a "priceless" reward—is fraught with contradiction.

We all know money can't buy love. Right? But in this country we have been trained by commercials like this to show our love by spending money. The size of the rock your fiancé gives you is a measure of his love for you. The size of the box of chocolates you give your man on Valentine's Day shows him how much you love him. The expensive Ivy League tuition and wedding reception a father subsidizes shows his daughter how much he loves her . . . and on and on.

Sure, it's great to be on the receiving end of extravagant presents, and spending money—if you have it—is one way to show how much you care. But some very special people in my life have taught me that there is a far more valuable gift. That is the gift of

awareness, and it's a gift that we all can afford to give to everyone around us. We all feel we have to love our family, but true generosity of spirit begins with noticing and honoring the people around us who are not, technically speaking, "family." Look carefully and you'll begin to notice little scenarios involving loving-kindness and money being acted out around us everyday.

I first learned the lesson of generosity of spirit from a \$10-an-hour receptionist at a magazine where I worked. The atmosphere at this small magazine, always on the verge of success and the edge of bankruptcy, was tense beyond words. The staff was small and the workload that each of us bore was enormous. Yet one day Gracie, who often had to borrow money at the end of the week to get by, noticed that my nerves were shot and that I hadn't had time to take an afternoon break, so she bought me a fruit drink. The \$1.50 the drink cost was a fortune to her, but the fact that she took the time to notice that I needed a pick-me-up made her gesture priceless . . . and no fruit drink ever tasted better. We began treating each other to drinks every afternoon, and somehow we both managed to survive that pressure cooker.

Sure, it's great to be on the receiving end of extravagant presents, and spending money—if you have it—is one way to show how much you care. But some very special people in my life have taught me that there is a far more valuable gift. That is the gift of awareness, and it's a gift that we all can afford to give to everyone around us.

Another friend I know who works in Center City Philadelphia can't walk by a street person without handing out a dollar bill. Do those dollar bills make a big difference in the quality of their lives? On a material level, probably not, though you might be surprised to learn how much—a warm cup of coffee, a 99 cent Big Mac—a dollar still can buy. What's more important to them, I suspect, is the fact that he took the time to notice them, to validate their humanity, to say a few words to them.

I LOVE giving presents; in fact, I may be the worst offender when it comes to spending money extravagantly, foolishly, to show my affection during the holidays or any time. But what Gracie and other wonderful people in my life have taught me is this: The best presents that those I love give me is their presence in my life. And it doesn't cost them a penny. □

*Gail Harlow is the founding editor of **MAKING BREAD**. Send your comments, questions and suggestions to gail@makingbreadmagazine.com.*

*This bi-monthly e-zine is a publication of **MAKING BREAD: The Magazine for Women Who Need Dough** (www.makingbreadmagazine.com). The pun in the title is definitely intended, reflecting the spirited approach we'll be taking in delivering the information you need to help you make the most of your money. While poking fun at lingering stereotypes about purse strings and apron strings, we aim to inform, explore, challenge, and change your attitudes about money. And entertain you in the bargain! Read **MAKING BREAD**—and you'll be rolling in dough!*

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TIP BANK

Smart Ways to Save 'George'

SAVING & SPENDING

MAKING BREAD'S Holiday Shopping Guide: 8 Tips to Save Your Budget—and Spare Your Nerves

Short of unexpected emergencies, there's nothing more likely than the holidays to bust your budget. On average, people end up spending almost \$1,000 for gifts to celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanza, according to the latest retail figures. And women, who are responsible for 80 percent of household purchasing decisions, end up doing most of the gift buying. Given the current iffy economy, it's more important than ever this year to shop smart.

Here are eight savvy, sassy tips to make your holiday shopping experience more joyful—and less destructive to your budget.

1. Get organized.

Make a list of the people you want to buy gifts for, decide in advance how much you have to spend—and don't go over budget, even if you're tempted by that last-minute "great find." Is Aunt Agnes really going to wear that \$250 silk kimono—or are you using it as an excuse to also buy the sexy red bustier on your own wish list? Don't get caught up in the "something for you, something for me" shopping syndrome!

2. Pay cash. That way you won't end up weeping when the bills come due in January. Interest rates can double or



triple the cost of any purchase, depending on how quickly you pay off your bill. When you pull out that plastic, ask yourself, "Am I still paying for last year's gifts?" If you charged them, chances are pretty good that you are.

3. Don't think big-ticket items. You don't have to spend a lot to show people you love them. If you or someone in your family has been hit by a layoff, or you think that you might be in danger of

Try not to get caught up in the 'something for you, something for me' shopping syndrome!

being affected by one, be particularly frugal this year. Give IOU's instead of gifts—photos of extravagant gifts you'll buy them when your ship comes in, or "coupons" for services you'll provide for them throughout the coming year, i.e., back rubs, car washes, baby-sitting, meal preparation, etc. Remember, the best present you can give your loved ones is your presence in their lives, and that doesn't cost you anything.

4. Shop for small gifts that keep on giving, or increase in value over time. Books, for instance, have become hot collectible items. Check out the prices on www.abebooks.com and you'll see what we mean. The signed first edition you pay \$25 for today may one day be worth \$250 or \$2,500.

Wine also increases in value. Visit www.wine.com for an exotic assortment, plus buying advice. The site is currently offering up to 50 percent off select wines.

And for a gift that keeps on giving, why not buy the art lovers in your family a Monet or Picasso—or at least a membership to the local art museum where they can visit the works of the masters and moderns as often as they like.

5. One for all. If you have an extended family, suggest that instead of individual gifts to all the nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins, you make a collective contribution to the charity of your choice. Send around a ballot so that every one can vote on which local or national organization will be the recipient of your family's largesse.

6. Bargain. Particularly when shopping at smaller independent shops, ask the salesperson (who may well be the owner) if this is the best price he or she can give you. Even at department stores, the salespeople or department managers have some discretion to offer a better price.

When you pull out that plastic, ask yourself, 'Am I still paying for last year's gifts?' If you charged them, chances are pretty good that you are.

7. Cut the cost of greeting cards. If you have a long holiday card list, check out the price of cards at your local Dollar Store. Why spend \$15 or more for 12 cards, when you can get the same number or more for \$1? Who cares how fancy the cards are, when you're saving that kind of money? And the Dollar Store cards are actually quite attractive.

8. Save the best gift for yourself. The best gift you can give yourself is money in the bank. Think of money as a "collectible." Consider making an extra contribution to your savings account, or open one for your children, before you even start your holiday shopping. —Gail Harlow

CHEAP & EASY EATS



PARTY DIP-LOMACY: Bowl Your Guests Over with These Penny- and Pound-Wise Holiday Dips!

Here are three great party-starters to serve at your next holiday get-together. Their secret? They go easy on your pocketbook and even easier on your waistline. They've been stripped of their high-calorie ingredients and made flavorful with lemon juice and other tasty touches. Serve with wedges of pita bread, crackers, or raw vegetable dippers. →

Yogurt Dip

Yogurt, that mainstay of on-the-run lunchers and virtuous dieters alike, has a secret life. Drained of its excess liquid, it becomes a thick, rich mixture that doubles for sour cream. Mix in some extras and you've got a perfect dip.

Ingredients & Preparation

1 pint of plain low-fat or nonfat yogurt
Dijon mustard
Garlic clove
Scallions

Line a strainer with a paper coffee filter or cheesecloth and place it over a bowl. Spoon the yogurt into the strainer and refrigerate overnight. The longer it drains, the thicker it becomes.

When the yogurt is as thick as you want it, transfer to a bowl and mix in two or three tablespoons of grainy Dijon mustard, a clove of garlic, minced or put through a press, and some finely chopped scallions. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Chickpea Dip

You can make a slimmed-down version of a traditional Middle Eastern hummus by substituting yogurt for high-calorie sesame seed paste and sparking the flavor with lemon juice and some garlic.

Ingredients & Preparation

1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
2 tablespoons of plain low-fat or nonfat yogurt
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt and pepper

Purée all ingredients in a blender or food processor until smooth, occasionally scraping down the sides of the bowl. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Transfer to a small bowl. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Baba Ghanoush

Here's a low-cal version of a time-honored Middle-Eastern dip that's perfect with pita bread.

Ingredients & Preparation

1 medium eggplant
1 small onion, cut in chunks
1 clove garlic
5 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Wash the eggplant and prick it all over with a fork. Bake in a 400-degree oven for about 40 minutes or until soft. Cool, pare, and cut into cubes. Combine eggplant, onion, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil in the bowl of a food processor or blender and purée until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a small bowl. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

—Nissa Simon

SUCCESS GUIDE



Do You Have to 'Give at the Office'? ... and Other Business-Etiquette Questions Answered for the Holidays

The Hanukkah/Christmas holiday season has historically been the time when certain office workers are given a little something—say, a Park Avenue triplex or a six-figure bonus—to show their company's appreciation for the past year's business performance. Of course, we're talking here about CEO's and their sultan-like corporate perks and bonuses.

But for the little people—that would be you and me—the holiday season involves more Spartan issues, such as: what business gifts to give and to whom, and how to survive the annual office party without making an idiot of yourself.

At the start of my journalism career, I worked for national news organizations as a lowly secretary and researcher. Each year, my boss of the moment would give me a breathtakingly underwhelming gift—say, a review copy of a cookbook or an ashtray with the company logo. I would dimple adorably to feign gratitude, while in my heart I was deeply disappointed that the boss hadn't spent a nickel—a goodie from Saks would have been nice—whereas I had actually parted with my hard-earned dough (on a necktie; my bosses were always male).

Drinking liquor at the office party will loosen your tongue with the very people who put food on your table, and you might do something spectacularly stupid, like tell the boss that he or she should be popping Altoids.

As for Christmas parties, there was the year that the president of the company had one martini too many and, teetering on his Brooks Brothers wingtips, made a disgusting remark about my posture (okay, boobs). I burst into tears—this was long before sexual harassment became a no-no—and went home.

Some things have changed since then—thank God—but grinch-like behavior can still surface to mar office jollity in the weeks leading up to the holidays. What follows is an informal set of guidelines on holiday giving, receiving, and party manners with co-workers to help you keep your good cheer into the New Year.

1. Gift-Giving. A man I know who has his own small company used to give annual presents from Tiffany's to a select group of clients. This guy swears that the very people to whom he sent these robin's-egg-blue boxed gifts never used his services again;

the clients to whom he hadn't sent gifts continued to give him business.

Moral: Keep it simple, and keep it semi-personal. If you want to demonstrate appreciation to a client or co-worker, give the person a gift certificate to a store you know he or she frequents. As to giving a gift to your boss, better to err on the side of modesty. In some cases, depending on whether you work closely with the person, or whether your company even has a history of gift-giving, a present may not even be necessary. But if holiday gifts are customary, use common sense. You don't want to embarrass (or annoy) your boss by going overboard. Rather, consider, for instance, a set of golf tees, or a picture frame, which would be suitably neutral—thoughtful, yet restrained.

2. Gift-Getting. Some large corporations buy holiday gifts in bulk and send the same old same old to each employee. A friend of mine, who happens to be Jewish, tells of the year that Christmas wreaths were delivered to every employee's home, an example of institutional insensitivity if ever there was one. Holiday gifts to underlings from corporate chieftains are usually pro forma, so don't expect a set of velvety monogrammed towels or a trip to a spa. And whatever you get, take the high road: A simple thank you note on real stationery will make you look like the refined femme that you are.

3. Holiday Cards. I used to send cards not just to office workers, but to everyone I know. Those days are over, because my new policy is: if I never get in touch with someone during the year, a holiday card isn't going to bridge the interpersonal gap. On the other hand, if you want to keep your name current with bosses and colleagues, go ahead and send cards. Chances are, however, that they'll go on the pile of other cards that crowd people's mailboxes and be unremembered. Rule of thumb: If it makes you feel good, do it.

4. The Office Party. Read my lips: "Do Not Drink Booze at the Organizational Soiree." I speak from red-faced, slurry experience. Liquor will loosen your tongue with the very

people who put food on your table, and you might do something spectacularly stupid, like tell the boss that he or she should be popping Altoids. If you really want to have fun, grasp a glass of club soda and observe your co-workers' antics. Imogene, the mousy bookkeeper, might become kittenish with Charlie in accounting. The CEO might spill the beans about your boss's love life. It could be the jolliest time you've ever had sober.

These guidelines might strike some people as Bah Humbug-ish, but it's important to remember that holiday business etiquette is collegial, not social. A gift isn't going to lead to a promotion (except in scurrilous circumstances), and it isn't going to prevent getting fired. Go ahead; be cheery during the corporate festivities. But make really merry, and be truly generous, on your own time, with the people you hold nearest and dearest. That, after all, is what the holidays are really for.

—Victoria Secunda

LOAFING



Stoweflake Mountain Resort

GET AWAY FROM HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: 5 Great Travel Packages

The holidays are traditionally a time of family get-togethers. Just for a change of pace, this year why not plan a holiday get-away? Instead of watching "A Christmas Carol" for the umpteenth time on television, imagine spending Christmas in England, where Charles Dickens wrote that holiday classic. Or go caroling in Germany, the land of Tannenbaums, Christmas Stollen, wooden nutcrackers, marzipan and St. Nicholas. Or leave the snow behind and put

yourself on "cruise control" for the holidays.

Below, are five holiday packages wrapped up in big red bows. Each would make a great gift for you and someone you love.

Have a Dickens of a Holiday. With departures December 5, 7, 12 and 14, Globus's eight-day "Christmas in England" tour features, among other treats, London's famous Christmas illuminations at St. Paul's Cathedral, a walking tour of Oxford, a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Christmas lunch at Warwick Castle. Prices, including airfare, run from \$851 to \$1,129 (per person, double occupancy, based on departure from New York City). For more information, call 800-338-4962.

O, Tannenbaum! Globus also offers an eight-day "Christmas in Winter Wonderland" tour, with departures on December 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 17. You'll start out in Munich, Germany, shop in that cosmopolitan city's Christmas markets and visit the Amalienburg hunting lodge, travel to Innsbruck, Austria, driving through the breathtaking Bavarian Alps, tour Salzburg, Austria, then round out the tour in Vienna, Austria, where you'll take a walking tour of the fabled city known for its old-world charm, as you're serenaded by Christmas carolers singing "O, Tannenbaum" as it's meant to be sung. Prices, including airfare, range from \$978 to \$1,154 (per person, double occupancy, based on departure from New York City). For more information, call 800-338-4962.

Holiday on the High Seas. A true getaway, a cruise is a low-stress way to survive the holidays. Consider Norwegian Cruise Line's four-day Caribbean getaway, sailing from Miami, Florida, with stops in Key West, Florida, and the island of Cozumel, Mexico. Spend December 23 to 27 aboard ship, enjoying shipboard entertainment, meals and daily activities—or just chill out in the sun. Orbitz.com lists this cruise at \$379 per person, double occupancy (not including airfare or taxes). Compared to the brochure price of

\$749, that's a real deal. For more details and cruise deals, visit www.orbitz.com.

Stowe Away. You don't need a boat to become a stowaway. Escape to Stowe, Vermont, for the holidays. Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa, a family owned and operated inn that's earned the reputation of a full-service luxury resort, offers a holiday setting with all the comforts of home—plus room service. Maybe Santa will put one of these holiday packages under your tree: "Holiday in Vermont I" from December 20 to 26, includes outdoor activities followed by quiet evenings by the fire, a visit from "Kris Kringle and a reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas," full use of all resort and spa facilities, breakfast and dinner, plus complimentary après ski hors d'oeuvres, daily. Price for a four-night minimum stay is \$510 to \$760 per person, double occupancy. Kids stay free, in the same room with their parents.

Or ring in the New Year at the Stoweflake with its "New Year's Kick-Off" package, from December 26 to January 1, 2003. The package includes a New Year's Eve Gala and Family Winter Olympics, plus all of the above amenities. Prices range from \$726 to \$1,036 per person, double occupancy for this four-night minimum stay. For more information on both of these packages, visit www.stoweflake.com or call 800-253-2232.

Flying Lessons. Getting through airport security may be the biggest challenge of the season, if you're traveling. For the latest information on what you're allowed to carry onboard, check the Transportation Security Administration's list of prohibited and permitted items at www.tsa.gov/trav_consumers/trav_consumers_index.shtm.

Travel light and limit your carry-on luggage to essentials. Send wrapped gifts ahead by mail or express mail services. To make it easier on yourself, ship any gifts you receive as well, rather than carrying them home with you.

Think positively, but prepare for the worst by researching alternate flights or other

means of transportation, in case of cancellations or delays. And consider flying from a smaller airport, if you have the option. For instance, try Midway instead of O'Hare in Chicago; Burbank or Long Beach instead of LAX in Los Angeles; Providence, Rhode Island, instead of Logan in Boston. Low-cost carriers tend to fly from these smaller venues, so you may end up saving not only time but money as well. Happy Holidays!

—Gail Harlow

CHEAP CHIC



Haven't Got a Thing to Wear to That Holiday Bash? Hold a 'Couture Swap'—or Become a 'Closet Environmentalist'

Ah, the holidays. The tinsel, the menorah, the mistletoe. The Yorkshire pudding, the latkes, the champagne. It's a time of sharing (rides to parties), of caring (whether or not you wore the same outfit twice), of reflecting (upon the dismaying image of yourself in a mirror trying to fit into a size 8).

Every year, I approach the holiday social whirl with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I'm pleased as the punch I expect to drink to be invited hither and yon, to see old friends and new. On the other hand, I fret about the possibility of getting stuck talking to a rich gasbag who goes on and on about estate taxes (I can't relate; I have enough troubles). Then there's the small matter of what to wear. →

This last used to be a life-or-death issue for me. I no longer have such worries, thanks to what I laughingly refer to as my indisposable disposable income. Instead, I have become a closet environmentalist—that is, I have learned the virtues of recycling certain garments. My new impecunious approach to couture is this: No one cares what you're wearing, as long as it isn't overalls. For this reason, last year I hit the suburban party circuit wearing a black sheath dress, which I adore and have owned for years. I added a huge fringed black fake-silk shawl purchased eons ago, which I draped around my shoulders. Since the ends of the fringe nearly reached my hem—voilà!—the ensemble looked brand-new.

I've dragooned my friends into what we call The Couture Swap (rhymes with "shop"), wherein we raid one another's closets for what to wear, so we don't have to go into hock for the fashion equivalent of a one-night stand.

This year, I will again be wearing black, in this case a pair of silk Donna Karen trousers my daughter bought a while back for \$5 at a flea market and which she has since donated to her Ma. With it, I will don a black silk sweater that has been in my bureau ever since Billy Martin last managed the Yankees. But heck, I don't want to look as though I'm going to a funeral, so I'm adding a gift given to me by friend—a hot purple, six-foot-long, spangle-covered scarf, which I will tie around my waist.

You catch my budgetary, party-seasonable drift. Indeed, you could actually illustrate, on a bar chart, the amount of money I've spent over the last decade on Special Occasion Outfits, with the bars getting shorter, and shorter, and then invisible. To that end, I have not only recycled; I've also dragooned my friends into what we call The Couture Swap (rhymes with "shop"), wherein we raid one another's closets for what to wear, so we don't have to go into hock for

the fashion equivalent of a one-night stand. My chums can count on me for several pairs of chandelier earrings that would look nifty on Sophia Loren. I also have several tiny dressy handbags and a soignée black wool cape.

My gorgeous friend Barbara has different duds to bring to the Swap—all in colors I seldom wear but could be persuaded to, because, for one night, I could pretend I'm her. Then there's Ada, who has a closet full of stunning hand-knit designer sweaters. My pal Louise has offered to lend me her diamonds—real ones; I wouldn't dare—but I might take her up on her beaded Adolpho jacket.

I'm telling you, this swap system works miracles. Recently, Barbara called, and, in a voice tinged with hysteria, said, "I have to go to a 'do,' where there's a guy I'm trying to get to ask me out, and I have nothing to wear that isn't ancient, and I can't afford anything new because I've been laid off at work."

"Come right over," I said.

Ten minutes later, I was ordering Barbara to strip to her undies. I made her put on my black silk sweater and silk trousers, and I proceeded to the closet where I pulled out a tomato-red cardigan. "I'm a blond, I don't wear red," she whimpered.

"Now you do," I commanded.

Within 10 minutes, she looked like something out of Vogue: Head-to-toe black, with my cheery cardigan tied raffishly around her neck and my golden dangly earrings glinting on her ears.

"I dunno," she muttered. "If I wear this, will the guy want to date me?"

"You look fabulous! Who wouldn't want to date you?"

Barbara, still glum, left with my duds. A few days later, she called and exclaimed, "You are a lifesaver! I was the best-dressed woman there! I had the best time ever!"

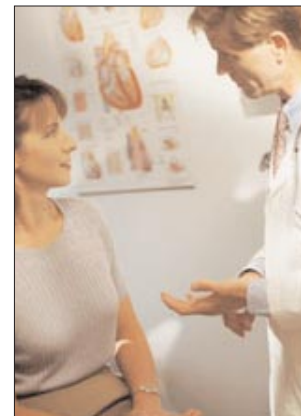
"So," I said. "Does this mean the guy asked you out?"

"No, silly!" she shrieked. "Better! He took one look at my outfit and offered me a job!"

—Victoria Secunda

HEALTH = WEALTH

How to Get the Most Out of Every Doctor's Visit



It's happened to all of us.

You go to see your doctor for a medical problem and before you have a chance to answer the question, "What brings you here today?" your doctor interrupts you with another question or a comment. You've had on average of 20 seconds to explain what's wrong. By the end of

the visit, you have the feeling that, although you were thoroughly poked and prodded, you couldn't get a word in edgewise and your doctor didn't really listen to you. Join the club. When asked about their medical care, most people list "My doctor doesn't listen to me" as one of the top complaints.

The pressure of medical practice today makes it all too easy for doctors to charge ahead with their own agenda and not realize that they're not paying attention to yours. So it's up to you to make yourself heard. Here are six ways to make sure that you get the most out of every doctor's appointment.

1. If this is your first visit, gather all your x-rays, relevant medical information, and lab reports and bring them with you.

If you haven't given your medical insurance number to the receptionist when you made the appointment, don't forget to bring along your insurance card.

2. Make a list—and check it twice—to make sure you haven't forgotten anything.

In order of importance, jot down any symptoms, comments, and questions. Don't just hastily scratch out a few words on a used envelope, but take your time to think through what you want to say to your doctor, write it down, and bring the list with you. Doctors tell too many stories about patients who say, "By the way, doc..." as they're walking out the door and follow up with, "I have this awful pain in my chest," or

"I've been coughing up blood for a while." That sort of serious symptom should be one of the first things you tell your doctor about.

3. If your doctor starts explaining something to you in language that sounds more like Urdu than English, hold up your hand for a time out. You should be able to understand the answers to your questions or the explanation of your problem, so never hesitate to ask for a clearer explanation. Stop your doctor as often as necessary to clarify what you've heard.

4. Be clear about what you expect from the visit. Do you want a referral to a specialist? Do you want a different medication, because the one you're taking upsets your stomach? Is a new symptom causing you discomfort? Doctors are knowledgeable about disease, but you're the expert on yourself. If you don't speak up, your doctor will have no way of knowing your concerns or preferences.

5. If your doctor prescribes a new medication, don't just accept the piece of paper.

Ask the name of the medication, what it's meant for, how often and how long you'll have to take it, the side effects you're likely to experience, which you can ignore and which you should be concerned about, whether to take it with food or not, and any medications or herbal supplements with which this drug might interact. Write down what your doctor tells you, and, once you've filled the prescription, compare this information with warnings printed on the prescription label. If there's any discrepancy, ask your pharmacist to call your doctor to clear up the matter.

6. Finally, take an active role in your care. You're not simply an achy elbow joint or an out-of-control ulcer or a urinary-tract infection. You're a person with likes, dislikes, and a life outside of this examining room. You should be able to disagree with recommendations or ask for an explanation of a proposed treatment. You should be able to talk to your doctor about what means a lot to you, how you choose to live your life, and the consequences to your health of your actions. If you can't do that, it may be time to find a new doctor. —Nissa Simon

FEMALE FINANCE

Would You Believe . . . a Health Insurance Plan That Saves You Money?

*Small Business Owners and the Self-Employed
Can Benefit from This Little-Known
Alternative to Traditional Medical Coverage*

By Elizabeth Lewin

A large percentage of medically insured Americans don't meet or exceed their deductibles. Yet health-insurance premiums increase at an average of 11 to 13 percent per year. The soaring cost of health care and medical insurance is especially scary for the millions of women who are self-employed or who work for small companies that offer little or no insurance coverage to their employees.

Designed as a cheaper alternative for these workers, who are on their own when it comes to purchasing health insurance, Archer Medical Savings Accounts (MSA's), named for Rep. Bill Archer (R-Texas), were introduced as a pilot program in 1996. This program to help small employers and the self-employed acquire affordable medical coverage was scheduled to expire at the end of this year, but with the backing of the Bush Administration, it has been extended for at least another year. Even if the program is canceled at the end of 2003, existing accounts will remain in

The soaring cost of medical insurance is especially scary for the millions of women who are self-employed or work for small companies that offer little or no insurance coverage to their employees.

place, so if you are currently paying for your own insurance and you find the premiums difficult to meet, now is the time to take a look at opening a Medical Savings Account.

How Do Medical Savings Accounts Work?

Similar to an IRA, and often, in fact, referred to as a Medical IRA, an Archer MSA is a tax-exempt trust, or custodial savings account, opened with a financial institution

for the purpose of saving money to pay for future medical expenses. By law, the account must be established in conjunction with an MSA-approved high deductible health plan (HDHP). Not all high deductible health plans qualify, so you'll have to find one that does.

The goal of MSA's is to provide comprehensive coverage at the lowest possible net cost, according to C. Dean Richard, president of MSA Benefits Network, an affiliation of independent insurance agents and financial planners. Richard explains, "What you are doing is taking the money you are cur-



rently spending on high-cost health insurance and splitting it up like this: putting a portion toward a low-cost high-deductible health plan and depositing the rest into a Medical Savings Account." The funds that accumulate in that account can be withdrawn at any time, tax-free, to cover your health plan deductible. Once you meet your plan's maximum out-of-pocket expenses, your insurance policy kicks in and covers expenses 100 percent. The money that accumulates in your savings account, and the interest that it earns, are tax-deductible as long as you use them for medical purposes.

To be eligible to open an Archer MSA, you must be self-employed or an employee (or spouse of an employee) of a small employer. A small employer is defined as someone who had an average of 50 or fewer employees during the last two calendar years. In either case, an HDHP, which has a higher annual deductible than typical health plans, but lower premiums, must be maintained. Currently, 39 states offer MSA/HDHP's. MSA Benefits Network's Web site, www.msahealthplans.com, lists the states where these plans are available.

Two Women, Two Plans, One Choice Sally's Traditional Plan. Sally is a self-employed writer with two kids and has a medical plan through a writer's organization. The plan is called a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO). A PPO is a network of doctors. She has a primary physician, who refers her and the children to a specialist, when needed. She pays a small co-payment of \$20, at the time of service, to her primary physician or any doctor to whom she is referred. For medical procedures and surgery, she is billed 30 percent of the total bill, after the deductible. If she seeks care outside of the network, the PPO only pays 50 percent of the bill.

She has a deductible of \$1,000 per person, with a maximum family deductible of

\$3,000. The out-of-pocket maximum is \$5,000 per family member and \$15,000 per family, and that doesn't include the deductible. "I never reached the deductible until last year," says Sally. "I needed surgery and additional treatment afterwards, and the bills were horrendous."

Sally's premiums soared last year from \$625 to \$935 per month. Her out-of-pocket expenses for the year were \$2,560, plus \$11,220 in premiums, for a total of \$13,780. The out-of-pocket payments were made with after-tax dollars. (However, since she is self-employed, 70 percent of her premium is tax-deductible.)

Jessica's HDHP. Jessica, a friend of Sally's, has an HDHP with a deductible of \$4,950. Even with a family, she pays a premium of only about \$300 per month (or \$3,600 per year), less than half of what Sally pays for her traditional plan. Jessica can choose her

doctors (remember, Sally belongs to a PPO and must stay within its network of doctors or the plan will only pay half the bill).

Some Caveats: HDHP premiums vary greatly and are dependent on the pre-existing health conditions of each person or family member to be insured,

their health history, etc. Smokers are really hit hard. Where you live also counts. You might pay three times as much in Miami as you do in Gainesville, Florida. Depending on the law in your individual state, coverage for certain conditions may be excluded or modified, a higher premium may be charged or coverage denied. So you need to read the fine print, and ask questions of the agent or broker who sells you your policy.

Jessica's MSA Contribution. Because the amount you pay into your MSA is tax-deductible, Congress has set limits on the amount you can contribute yearly. The formula is based on the HDHP deductible you choose: 75 percent of the deductible, for a family (2 or more people), or 65 percent, if you're single, is the maximum allowable con-

All told, this year, Jessica paid an annual amount of \$6,818 (\$3,600 in premiums, plus \$3,218 to her MSA). Sally paid \$11,220 in premiums alone for her traditional plan.

tribution to your MSA. You are also required to maintain the HDHP all year in order to be eligible to contribute the maximum amount. A self-employed person cannot contribute more than his or her self-employment income minus business expenses.

One major difference between this and traditional health plans: With an HDHP/MSA, the deductible is per family and not per person. The deductibles that apply for 2002 are listed in the chart below. They will probably increase next year.

Jessica contributes 65 percent of her maximum deductible of \$4,950, for an annual contribution to the MSA of \$3,218. If she took the lower deductible of \$3,300, she'd be putting less into the MSA. She uses the money in the account to help pay for smaller, routine medical bills, tapping into her account by debit card or check. When her maximum out-of-pocket expenses are reached (and, remember, expenses for every family member count toward this limit), the high-deductible policy will kick in and pay all covered medical expenses, 100 percent

| Type of Coverage | Minimum Annual Deductible | Maximum Annual Deductible | Maximum Out-of-Pocket Expenses |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Self Only | \$1,650 | \$2,500 | \$3,300 |
| Family | \$3,300 | \$4,950 | \$6,050 |

(up to a lifetime maximum of \$8 million, per person). She will have enough saved to cover the maximum out-of-pocket expense at the end of her second year, assuming she pays in the same amount each year.

All told, this year, Jessica paid an annual amount of \$6,818 for her health plan (\$3,600 in premiums, plus \$3,218 to her MSA). Remember that Sally paid \$11,220 in premiums alone. Because she is self-employed, like Sally, her premiums are tax-deductible. But Jessica gets an added tax advantage, because the amount she pays into her MSA is also tax-deductible.

Money not paid out for medical expenses stays in an MSA account to cover possible medical expenses next year or 10 years down the road, or it can be withdrawn at retire-

ment. In the meantime, it is invested in your choice of investment fund, and interest accumulates. In addition to covering deductible expenses under your HDHP, you may make tax-free withdrawals to pay for medical services not covered by your insurance, to pay for long-term-care insurance, or to cover COBRA payments or health insurance premiums in the event that you become unemployed.

The MSA Tax Benefit. You or your employer (whoever opens and contributes to the account) will receive a tax benefit for the amount contributed to the MSA. Jessica, for instance, with her family plan, might receive a tax break of \$901 (28 percent of \$3,218), assuming that she is in the 28 percent tax bracket. An employer might arrange to contribute an amount to each employee's account. This produces a tax deduction for the employer and is not considered income to the employee. Thus, MSA's represent an attractive way for small business owners to offer health benefits. The company saves on premium costs by switching to an HDHP, and gets a tax break

in the bargain.

If your employer doesn't contribute, then you can deduct the entire eligible amount—and you qualify for the deduction even if you don't itemize.

The MSA Retirement Benefit. If you contribute the maximum amount each year to an MSA, and enjoy good health much of that time, you will accumulate a sizable nest egg. After age 65, the account is treated as an IRA and you can make withdrawals for non-medical reasons. These are considered non-qualified withdrawals, so they are reported as ordinary income and taxed.

Why Sally Switched. After comparing the benefits of her plan with her friend Jessica's MSA/HDHP, Sally decided to switch. She took into account the tax advan-

tages of the MSA, as well as the heavy out-of-pocket expenses she paid with the PPO—a deductible for each family member, co-payment of 30 percent (after the deductible), and an out-of-pocket maximum of \$5,000 per family member.

"I paid huge premiums for the PPO and only got a small amount the year I was sick. I need catastrophic insurance, which a high deductible health plan offers me, and with this new plan I get that plus a savings plan." She also likes the fact that her new HDHP pays for procedures that her traditional plan didn't cover—eye laser surgery, teeth implants, and "alternative" therapies, such as hair implants and dental procedures.

Other factors that convinced Sally to switch: If she doesn't use the funds in her account, she doesn't lose them. Chances are good that she will build up enough savings over the years to cover any year in which she has an unexpected medical expense that requires her to pay the maximum out-of-pocket figure. And anything left over will serve as additional retirement savings for her.

Is an MSA Right for You?

If, like Sally, you're self-employed and you're already paying for your own health insurance, by all means, look at the pros and cons of switching to a high deductible health plan and opening an MSA. If you work for a small business owner, or are a small business owner, you could also benefit from looking into this alternative to traditional plans. If your employer isn't familiar with MSA's, score points by recommending them to the boss.

There are numerous Web sites that offer information on MSA's, but not all are objective. I found www.msahelpplans.com, the Web site of MSA Benefits Network, very helpful. Another comprehensive source of information on MSA's is the Web site of Americans for Free Choice in Medicine (www.afcm.org/msas.html).

Summing up the benefits, MSA Benefit Network's Richard admits, "As an alternative to traditional health insurance, the MSA is going to be more attractive to people who

Sally's One-Year Traditional Plan Costs:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Total Claim | \$6,200 |
| Less Deductible | \$1,000 |
| | \$5,200 |
| Her Insurance Paid 70 percent, or | \$3,640 |
| She Paid the Balance Plus Her Deductible | \$1,560 \$1,000 |
| Sally Paid Annual Premium | \$2,560 \$11,220 |
| Total Sally Paid | \$13,780 |

Jessica's One-Year HDHP/MSA Costs:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Annual HDHP Premium | \$3,600 |
| Annual MSA Contribution | \$3,218 |
| Total | \$6,818 |
| Less tax deduction | \$901 |
| | \$5,917 |

are healthy and who are paying a bundle for their current insurance. Once you are in, you're in—so even if it goes away at the end of 2003, which I doubt, you'll be grandfathered in."

As Richard points out, these plans work best for the healthy and more affluent who already are paying for their own medical insurance. These people can afford to contribute to a medical savings plan and pay the high deductibles that come with an HDHP, if they become ill. In exchange, they'll benefit from the lower premiums, lower taxes, freedom of choice and additional retirement savings that MSA's offer.

MSA's are a very attractive alternative for those already paying for their own insurance. But their cost is still prohibitive for the more than 40 million uninsured Americans, who can't afford premiums at all, let alone high deductibles and savings contributions. For these people, many of whom are women and children, solutions to the high cost of health care still need to be found. □

Financial planner Elizabeth Lewin is the co-author of the recently published book "Family Finance" (Dearborn Trade). She is a Contributing Editor to MAKING BREAD.

THE WORKING MOM'S SHRINK



The doctor and her daughter

Photo by Shel Secunda

By Marcia Eckerd, Ph.D.

It's mid-November, and our hands are already full. We're balancing work and family, deadlines and dinner, with 24 hours' worth of commitments every day, thank you. It's no wonder that so many of us come down with an acute case of the "Holiday Dreads" at this time of year. All we can think of is: "How am I ever going to get through the next two months?" That sentiment can dampen the holiday spirits of even the best of us. At worst, it brings out our inner Grinch.

My friend has a theory that the holidays are a conspiracy against women. What man buys and wraps all the presents, bakes the cookies, decorates the house, handles family squabbles and keeps track of countless kid-related concerts, visitors, etc.? There's a joke that Santa Claus has to be a man, because no one else could show up with presents one day a year and be considered a saint!

I have a holiday mantra to repeat 10 times whenever the Holiday Dreads attack: 'Enjoy the people.' We can't do that unless we find ways to enjoy ourselves.

No wonder working moms face the holiday season with a mixture of fear and anticipation. I have a holiday mantra to repeat 10 times whenever the Holiday Dreads attack: "Enjoy the people." We can't do that unless

Gifts to Purchase, Feasts to Prepare, and Not a Creature Is Stirring but Mom

Sound Familiar? Here's How to Turn Your Holiday Dread into Holiday Delight

we find ways to enjoy ourselves. To be able to enjoy the people, you need to simplify wherever you can and do things in a way that will give you some breathing room. Let go of your visions of the perfect dinner, and the perfect family opening the perfect presents. Ask yourself: "What do I enjoy?" and "How can I maximize what I enjoy and minimize the drudgery?" The more you can give yourself a break, the more energy you'll have to give others your love and attention, and to experience the genuine holiday spirit.

For many of us, the Dreads are fueled by family expectations and conflicts. How can you be with Grandma Edith and Grandma Frances at the same time? What do you do with siblings who aren't speaking to each other? The idea is enjoying the people, right? Right. But putting a priority on relationships doesn't mean you can make everyone happy all the time. In fact, some people aren't happy no matter what you do. You can drive yourself crazy, or you can recognize a no-win situation. To paraphrase the serenity prayer, change what you can change and accept what you can't. So decide with your spouse or significant other or your kids how you want to deal with these tricky family situations, and don't let anyone make you feel guilty about your decision.

Another holiday dread is spending time with relatives you see once or twice a year and with whom you seldom agree about

MAKING A LIST AND CHECKING IT TWICE: Some of My Favorite On-line Shopping Sites

Cosmetics: www.lushcanada.com, www.sephora.com

Clothing: www.polo.com, www.gap.com, www.graffitionline.com, www.anthropologie.com

Gourmet Items: www.williams-sonoma.com, www.barefootcontessa.com, www.stonewallkitchen.com, www.godiva.com.

Gadgets: www.sharperimage.com

Electronics: www.circuitcity.com

Toys: www.toysrus.com, www.fao.com

Movies: www.reel.com

Liquor: www.wine.com

Fun Stuff: www.vermontteddybear.com, www.consumerworld.com, www.pierone.com, www.potterybarn.com

anything. When the family's all gathered together around the holiday table and the conversation starts to get heated, don't feel that you have to win a debate. Here's a conversational ploy that works with the most irascible relative. Just think of the martial arts. A small person can throw a big one by using his or her energy and going with the flow. Listen and be very understanding: "I really see what you mean." No one can disagree if you're not arguing, and the less self-defensive you are, the easier it is to listen. They might return the favor.

My friend has a theory that the holidays are a conspiracy against women. What man buys and wraps all the presents, bakes the cookies, decorates the house, handles family squabbles and keeps track of countless kid-related concerts and visitors?

If your Holiday Dreads strike because you don't have family to enjoy the holidays with, or they're far away, include friends. Make your own "family" and traditions with those you love. If your friends are tied up on the big days, get together at other times around the holidays. Create events that are easy on your time and budget, events that allow you to be surrounded by those you are fond of and who nourish your spirit.

10 Tips for Banishing Your Inner Grinch

- Shop online to save time. You can select gifts, have them shipped, and be done with it. Look for sites that offer free shipping.
- Take a personal day (during the week and with no kids) to shop and/or make preparations.

Think of it as preventive mental health.

- If you're hosting a holiday event, to make it less stressful, ask guests to bring certain items of food and buy some take-out to supplement what you prepare.
- Find ways to entertain that don't involve an entire sit-down meal where you are cook, waitress, busboy and dishwasher. One of the best holiday parties we ever had was a late-evening party of desserts, coffee and champagne. I bought great desserts, lit candles, made a fire and enjoyed my friends.
- If you can afford it, hire someone to help do the housecleaning. Even a teenager might welcome extra bucks to spend on friends at this time of year.
- Honor rituals you enjoy, and consider changing those you don't.
- Be choosy about how you spend your precious time. Don't feel obliged to attend every party (socially or at work) or to travel. You can visit later.
- Spouses and partners can be helpful if you ask for help clearly and realistically. Be specific about how they can help.
- Regarding holiday traffic, see the holidays as an opportunity to practice patience under pressure. Put on nice music and do mini-relaxations in traffic jams or the airport waiting line.
- Take care of yourself. Don't forget your de-stressing routines, such as exercise, meditation or yoga. You will need them. You are the energy hub for your family, and if you run on empty, no one will get anywhere. □

A licensed psychologist, Dr. Marcia Eckerd is a partner in Associates for Children and Families, a practice that specializes in working with individuals, couples and families to enhance relationships and empower individuals. If you have a question that you'd like her to address in this column, e-mail her at acffassociates@aol.com.

What Do You Do When the Economy Changes All the Rules?

Adapt to Your Clients' Needs, Says This Silicon Valley Survivor of the Tech Downturn

By Vivian Y. Shic

The two words that best describe Kristine Schaefer are adventurous and adaptable. While completing a degree in International Relations from the University of Minneapolis in 1985, she left her Midwestern roots and flew across the Pacific Ocean to study one of the world's oldest extant languages at Tianjin Nankai University in The People's Republic of China. Her love of the Asian culture and language led her the following autumn to Taiwan, where she took language classes at the Mandarin Training Center at National Taiwan University.



Kristine Schaefer

place. Wanting to be a part of the action, in 1997, Schaefer joined a technology PR firm. Three years later, she started Loma Communications, a Palo Alto, California, strategic communications agency geared to coach young tech executives needing to improve their communication skills.

Schaefer has seen the tech economy go from boom to bust. But through it all, she has found ways to adapt and

succeed. Below, she shares her survival instincts with **Making Bread**.

MB: You've left high-paying corporate jobs to strike out on your own more than once. What's the single most important piece of advice you would give to women who want to start their own business?

KS: Learn the language of business—in other words, numbers. Without a well-researched business plan, it's difficult to determine if a business idea is viable.

Recently, I began discussions with a would-be entrepreneur whose business concept appealed to me. Knowing she'd be great at running this business, I was inclined to become an investor and adviser, until we came to discussing the business plan. "I'll hire someone to do it for me," she said. Her reluctance to delve into the numbers dampened my enthusiasm for supporting her. If she doesn't have the discipline to learn the basics of business planning, how disciplined will she be operating the company?

MB: Where did you get the idea for your current business?

KS: The Internet boom brought many young, relatively inexperienced executives to the head of new companies. They were very bright technical or market innovators and the media and the public couldn't get enough of them. I realized that they needed an intensive program to help them develop the communications skills they required to be successful. I loved setting the strategy and coaching executives, so those became the core programs of my business.

Survival Secret: 'Adapting to business cycles means recognizing the types of services clients need today, which are often different from what was required during the boom times.'

MB: From Internet boom to Internet bust, you've managed to hold on. What skills and attitudes do you think women need to ride out a tough economy?

KS: Adaptability is the most important quality to have. In professional services, we've gone from one extreme to another in the way we operate. Decisions that we've made over the phone in a matter of minutes are now drawn out over weeks and scrutinized by more people than ever before.

Adapting to business cycles means recognizing the types of services clients need today, which are often different from what was required during the boom times. You have to be patient and know that quality, experience and delivering lasting value are more important than ever.

MB: What was the biggest mistake you've made in establishing your business?

KS: Given the opportunity to do it all over again, I would have turned down some busi-

ness in order to spend more time diversifying my client base. Working with clients in a broader range of industries would have helped balance the downturn in the technology, telecommunications and financial-services industries.

MB: What was your smartest money decision?

KS: Never taking stock in lieu of cash payment and not getting greedy with pricing. I always want to leave my clients feeling that they have received good value.

MB: As a media specialist, what advice can you offer women on how to publicize and market their businesses?

KS: Everyone loves to hear a good story, so if you're not comfortable talking about yourself, tell an interesting anecdote about one of your customers or how your product or service delivers value. The one story that every owner must learn to tell is why you started the business. People will learn something about you and what you stand for.

MB: What tips can you offer about financial funding?

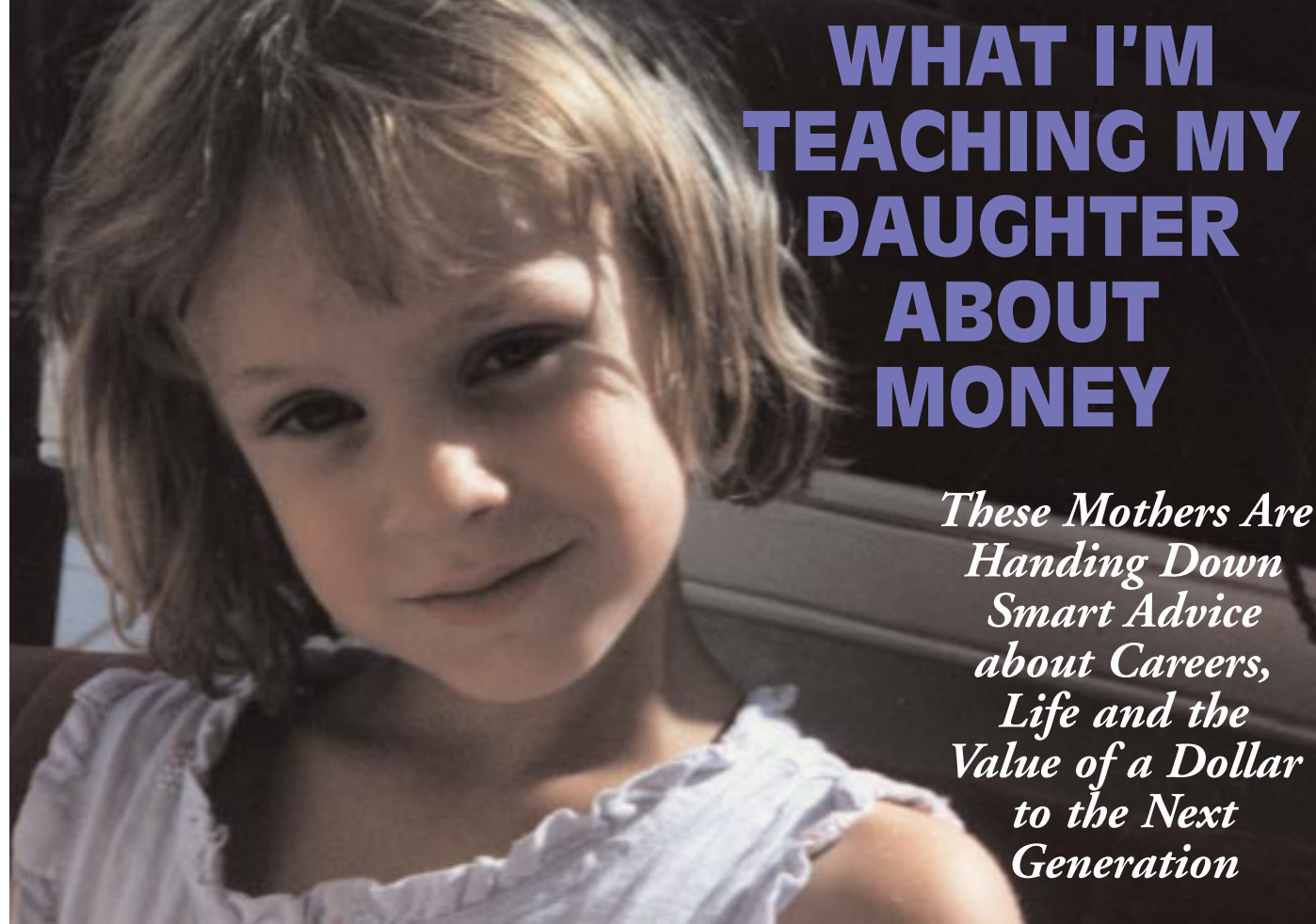
KS: Money is perhaps easier to get than good, experienced counsel. Find an investor who's willing to provide both and whose advise will contribute to your success. Find creative ways to get things done that don't require a lot of capital.

MB: Who influenced your attitude towards money?

KS: My mother; she taught me how to get things done without spending a great deal of time or money. Along with my father, she raised 10 children while working full time. How she managed to get us all off to school each morning without ever being late for work is still a mystery to me! □

Vivian Y. Shic is an associate editor at **MAKING BREAD**. Kristine Schaefer can be contacted via e-mail at kschaefer@lomacomunications.com.

Photo Courtesy of Kristine Schaefer



WHAT I'M TEACHING MY DAUGHTER ABOUT MONEY

*These Mothers Are
Handing Down
Smart Advice
about Careers,
Life and the
Value of a Dollar
to the Next
Generation*

The author's daughter, Julia, in 2nd grade, already has a passbook savings account and wants to be an artist or an architect when she grows up.

By Sharon Sorokin James

"Every woman should have a profession." This was a frequent pronouncement by my grandmother. She was born in May, 1890, and died a few days short of her 95th birthday. She came of age during the early 20th century. Life was certainly different then, yet she recognized, early on, the importance of education and independence for women. My grandmother was, nonetheless, in many ways a traditional wife, raising her children, waiting on her husband, and allowing, or submitting to, his decisions. But she was clear on the destiny of women. "Every woman should have a profession."

What made her think that? She was only 16 when her mother died, leaving her to care for her father and her five younger brothers. A good student, she had to leave high school to raise her siblings. Perhaps that motivated her. Or perhaps it was the example of her husband, who studied engineering in college after running a successful

business and marrying. Perhaps it was the dependence she felt on her husband. Perhaps it was her realization that no matter how hard she worked—and she did work hard, both inside and outside the home—she would never earn money of her own.

My grandmother would have been an excellent chief executive officer of a large corporation. She was organized, decisive, a good delegator, a rousing public speaker, an inspiring leader, and excellent at long-range and strategic planning. She organized Jewish women across the state of Connecticut to raise money for Hadassah, her favored charity, rising to the level of the national board of this very large charitable organization. She traveled the country, speaking, fundraising, and organizing women. But she was never paid for her work.

Her daughter, my mother, led an extremely sheltered life, doted upon by her parents and much older brothers. Although she was called "Baby" until she was 12, she

BEST NET BETS FOR KIDS

www.aba.com, site of the American Bankers Association, has a comprehensive "Get Smart about Credit" department aimed at young adults, plus a "KidStuff!" section suggesting free activities parents can do with their younger kids to help educate them about money matters.

www.independentmeans.com promotes financial independence for girls, offering board games, seminars, and books to help them learn the financial ropes. The site also sponsors a Business Plan competition, with a \$10,000 scholarship prize going to the winner.

www.kidsbank.com, brought to you by Sovereign Bank, aims to explain the "fundamentals of money and banking" and the importance of saving to children. Includes a "Millionaire Calculator" that shows a child how long it will take her to save a million dollars, based on principal, interest, and weekly savings.

www.teenvestor.com, created by the authors of "TeenVestor: The Practical Investment Guide for Teens and Their Parents" (Penguin/Putnam/Perigee) and "The Lemonade Stand: A Guide to Encouraging the Entrepreneur in Your Child" (Gateway Publishers), this site is geared for teens "who are interested in investing, starting their own businesses, and improving their lives in other positive ways."

was also encouraged intellectually and sent to Vassar for college, where she was desultorily pre-med, following the lead of her aunt, who was one of the very few women physicians of that era, until she met my father. He changed my mother's ambitions. A poor, hardworking and highly motivated law student, my father persuaded her to attend law school after college, (and marriage). So at the age of 21, with the blessing of her parents, she graduated from Vassar, got married, and enrolled in law school, all within the space of three months. One of only two women in her class, she was at the top of the class academically and became editor in chief of the law review, an exalted position. She practiced law with my father for more than 40 years, until his death at the age of 69. And she taught me that every woman should have her own money, so that she has the independence to make her own decisions.

My mother taught me that every woman should have her own money, so that she has the independence to make her own decisions.

What shall I teach my daughter? I am teaching her to save her money, something that I am not very good at myself. Each of my two children is given a weekly

allowance—one dollar for each grade they are in. My daughter, Julia, in 2nd grade, gets \$2 a week, and my son, Levi, in 5th grade, gets \$5—when I remember to give it to them. The only rule about allowance is that they must save at least half of it. They each have passbook savings accounts, and they are thrilled whenever we go to the bank to update our paltry interest and make further deposits. Whenever they deposit money, I try to match it with another deposit. I don't feel compelled to teach Julia that every woman should have a profession. She is seeing, as I did as a child, a professional, wage-earning, working woman every day of her life. She sees her friends' mothers working, and she also sees friends' mothers who don't work. I hope Julia will feel free to choose her destiny.

Although my family may be unusual, in that it contained more than its share of professional women, I don't think its financial lessons were unusual. To find out, I interviewed a number of women from a variety of walks of life. We talked about what their mothers taught them about money, and what they are teaching their daughters about money.

The first person I spoke with, Rosemary, is a partner in a prominent law firm (in fact, she is one of my partners). When I asked her, "What did your mother teach you about money?" she laughed tersely and said, "My father taught me about money." Her father →

was an accountant. Rosemary, at the age of 32, is single, talented and well on her way to financial independence. Brought up in a traditional, very close Italian family, she lives at home with her parents. She helps them with their expenses, I am sure, and she saves huge amounts of money, I am also sure. I suspect she will be financially secure enough to retire by age 45, if she so chooses.

Jane, a stunningly beautiful woman in her mid 40s, recently founded an independent classical music recording and production company. She will tell you that her business has not yet made her any money to speak of, but her first CD was released to glowing national reviews. When I asked Jane what her mother, a painter, taught her about money, she said, "She taught me to get good buys, to try not to pay full price, and she made me earn my own money by work-

Jane is teaching her daughter that money is something you have to work for, not something that just pops out of an ATM machine when you insert your card and punch a few buttons.

ing every summer." Jane is teaching her own daughter that money is something you have to work for, not something that just pops out of an ATM machine when you insert your card and punch a few buttons.

Some people think that frugality is genetic. Fran claims her family is the best evidence of that theory. Fran, also in her mid 40s, currently works as the head chef at an alternative private school. A fabulous cook, she has had many different careers and jobs, which she attributes, only somewhat facetiously, to her liberal arts degree. At various times in her life, Fran has worked in retail jewelry stores, taught pre-school, been a stay-at-home mom extraordinaire, and, in early days, worked in a travel agency, which her mother founded. Fran's mother, widowed by 40, taught Fran by example and by giving her responsibility. By



the time she was in high school, Fran had her own checking account (although she confesses she has never, ever balanced her checkbook, a confession in which I must guiltily join) and was responsible for buying her own clothes. She has always worked. The travel agency was founded shortly before her father's death, perhaps in anticipation of it. He died when Fran was 14. That, and Fran's mother's teaching, taught Fran to be responsible, to pay her bills on time and to save her money whenever possible.

Fran owned her own home and her own car before she was married, purchased with money she had earned and saved herself. From working with her mother in the travel agency, she saw the importance of hard work. She also saw her mother saving and investing, and Fran has followed her example. Now the mother of two daughters, Fran says she is teaching her daughters the same lessons. They both have allowances and savings accounts. But they each treat money very differently. Her older daughter enjoys spending her money and loves to shop, just like her father, a consummate shopper. Her younger daughter is frugal and focused on saving, just like Fran. This, she points out, is what makes her believe that there is a genetic component to how we handle money.

Genetic or not, like everything else, saving money is also a learned skill. Even if you are not naturally inclined to it, you can be taught to do it. Teaching your daughters about spending money wisely is equally, if not more, important. It is a chance to help

DON'T PASS THE BUCK: Be the One Who Teaches Your Kids About Saving & Spending Wisely

- Talk about money with your children—not about spending it, but about earning it.
- Either give your child an allowance or pay your child a modest amount for individual chores. Either way, require your child to save at least half of everything he or she makes, unless it is truly needed for the family's survival.
- Open a passbook savings account at your local bank and take your child there at least once a month to deposit allowances, earnings or gifts.
- If you can, match your child's savings, dollar for dollar.
- Help your child to set definite financial goals and to meet them. Keep the goals small enough that your child can easily succeed at meeting them. For example, maybe your daughter wants the latest Beanie Baby. Help her figure out how much it will cost (don't forget the tax), and then help her develop a plan to save up for it.
- Don't let financial-consumption goals (i.e., buying that Beanie Baby) cut into required savings. Encourage your child to pay for such items out of the discretionary portion of her allowance or chore money.

them emulate our strengths, or develop skills in areas in which we are deficient. The more structured you can be, the better. Not only that, if you are not good at saving money (like me), teaching your daughter how to do it will teach you how to do it better. Since thinking seriously about how to teach my children about money, I have cut back significantly on spending, my husband and I have started a financial plan, paid off our credit-card debt, and organized our bill-paying. It is never too late in life to do these things, but it is better to get your children started early.

If you are not good at saving money (like me), teaching your daughter how to do it will teach you how to do it better.

The lessons are well learned. My 10-year-old son has started going to the supermarket with me. He has an eye for bargains and is constantly checking the prices and trying to find the 2-for-1 sales. He will willingly turn down items that I deem too expensive, without a fuss. My daughter, too, is conscious of saving money. In addition to her passbook savings account, she has a wallet in which she hoards her allowance. She understands that she is never allowed to spend more than half of it, and she will often choose to spend less than her limit. I

try to let them purchase small items they want with their own money, so that they learn the importance of saving for a goal and enjoying the fruits of their labor. Even at their young ages, I think they appreciate that saving is important.

They have not yet learned, however, the joy of work as a way of earning money. They see my job, as a lawyer, as something that takes me away from them. Although they understand, on an intellectual level, that I get paid for it, and that the income is important to our family, they view it as a hindrance. Their own career choices are not influenced by income levels. My son wants to be a history professor and my daughter an artist or architect. Neither of them has ever asked how much money they would make doing those things. They want to do them because they love them. Of that I am very proud. And I hope I am teaching them enough about managing the money they will someday earn that they will be able to choose whatever career path enthralls them, rather than feeling the need to make a choice based on income.

That, I think, is the most important money lesson of all. □

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Would Job-Sharing Work for You?

Sometimes Less Is More, as This Creative Career Arrangement Proves

By Patricia Schiff Estess

“I fully intended to go back to work fulltime as Director of News Practices at ABC after Eli was born,” says attorney Dawn Porter. “But after the birth, I

felt a tremendous tug to be with him. I didn’t like the idea of part-time work, because I thought I wouldn’t be taken seriously as a professional and because my job is so demanding that I knew it wouldn’t work.”

Dawn’s boss had another idea, though. Kerry Marash, Vice President of Editorial Quality for ABC News and mother of teenagers, knew what she needed to operate the division smoothly. She also understood how torn new parents are between children and career. She planted an idea with Dawn. What if she shared the job with Barbara Fedida, a former producer at ABC and mother of two, who Kerry had lured back to work on a temporary, part-time basis to fill in for Dawn when she was on maternity leave?

“I was skeptical at first, especially since I had never met Barbara,” Dawn admits. “But I called her anyway and broached the idea.” And to Barbara, who wanted to read her boys goodnight stories as well as have a career, the idea was intriguing.

Before they could even consider this commitment, though, they knew they had to talk about their respective philosophies—how dedicated they were to the work, how their styles meshed, or didn’t mesh, and how they could make this arrangement work for them



on a personal and professional basis.

Quickly, they established that they were both Type-A personalities, dedicated to excelling at whatever they do.

They also agreed that, while they were willing to be flexible in their scheduling, they didn’t want to be on call every day of the week—which would have subverted the purpose of the arrangement. With this common vision, they carved out and submitted a job-sharing proposal, which Kerry championed and ABC accepted.

The arrangement works like this:
Dawn is in the office on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; Barbara on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesday, they have lunch to discuss any simmering issues.

Their arrangement works like this: Dawn is in the office on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; Barbara on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesday, they have lunch together to discuss any simmering issues, because they appreciate how vital communication and joint problem-solving are to the success of their arrangement. They share the title and split a salary that is slightly higher than the company would pay one person in this position, because the compa-

ny is getting six, rather than five, full days from the team. In other words, Dawn and Barbara each earn three-fifths of what Dawn was originally making. Their benefits (and they both work at least 30 hours a week in order to be eligible for them), such as vacation time, are determined by the length of time each has been with the company.

“No doubt about it, our colleagues are impacted by this arrangement,” says Dawn. “For example, I may have invested three days in arguing with someone in the legal department, and then I’m not there for the rest of the week. It leaves the lawyer feeling somewhat abandoned. I have to be sensitive to this and make it easier for her, either by making certain that Barbara is up to speed and suggesting she continue the discussions with her, or by allowing her to continue dealing with me, even though I’m going to be home.” Although neither Dawn nor Barbara want to make a practice of covering for each other when the other is supposed to be “on,” it happens on rare occasions.

“When you commit to an arrangement like this,” Barbara explains, “you understand that, in a crunch, there must be some give and take, so you have to build some flexibility into your life.” One way both women have done that is to retain their babysitters five days a week, even though they are scheduled to be at home for two of those days.

As for ABC, the company has been generous in its support. Dawn and Barbara were moved into a larger office and given desks and computers to accommodate each of them on their overlap day. They were given laptops, so that if they needed to work away from the office, they could.

Unfortunately, not all companies or managers can get their minds around the concept that two people can share an important job seamlessly. Managers often feel it’s too difficult to oversee, even though, generally, less supervision is needed, because job sharers take on most of the responsibility for making the arrangement work. Companies also tend to be concerned about the added costs of benefits, which are real, but what they often forget about are the

considerable savings to be gained from lower turnover and higher productivity as a result of this arrangement. All that said, if you’re convinced this arrangement will work for you, there are steps you and your job partner can take to sell the idea to management.

The Sales Pitch

If you’re toying with the idea of this arrangement, your first step would be to search out someone who might be a good partner and talk about the idea. Either one of you may have to learn some new skills to round out the position, but that will only

Two Heads Are Better Than One: In selling management on the idea, make the point that two people dealing with a problem are often more effective than one in coming up with a satisfactory or creative solution.

add to your value in the long run.

Talk to your boss about the idea before making a formal, written presentation. He or she may be able to give you ideas for handling either the request or the arrangement. You will probably be asked to develop a written proposal, which should include the following:

The benefits to the company and the department. Be as specific as possible, making the point that two people dealing with a problem are often more effective than one in coming up with a satisfactory or creative solution. If others in the company have worked in such an arrangement successfully, cite them. If the combination of two people’s talents will enhance the position, make that case. In every way possible, let the company know it’s getting two high-level, well-trained people who can be counted on because they don’t have to be brought up to speed; they already know the ropes.

A proposed schedule. Time configurations for every team vary, but the most frequently cited ones are 1) one person works mornings, the other afternoons; 2) one per-

son works one week, the other the next week; or 3) one works Monday through Wednesday until 1 P.M.; the other Wednesday noon through Friday, both of them overlapping for a debriefing lunch.

A proposed division of duties. In most job shares, both of you are able to do everything the job requires. But, on occasion, you'll have a successful job-sharing arrangement that resembles a good business partnership. One of you is slow, methodical, and pays attention to detail and the other is good at broad stroking and meeting deadlines. If that's the case, you might divide duties to reflect your strengths.

A communication plan. You have to know what has happened on the other job sharer's "watch." You might arrange to leave detailed e-mail messages for each other, supplemented with face-to-face meetings, phone calls, memos, and charts of pending projects. Or you might take communication one step further and share subtleties, such as how someone sounded on the phone, what a supplier told you about his view of the world situation, or what you heard about a colleague's father's medical condition. Sharing this information may seem gossipy, but it can be useful to your job sharer, who will be able to perform her job better when she understands the nuances of what has happened and what has been said when she was out of the office.

Proposed salaries and benefits. Speak to your human-resources department about whether or not you'd be entitled to full benefits (pro-rated, of course) under the arrangement you propose. Your salaries should be commensurate with the position (again, pro-rated) and any bonuses you'd be entitled to would be shared equally.

Sharing Success Stories

Before you dismiss this alternative work schedule as too complicated (and let no one tell you it's easy to pull off, because it isn't), let me share a couple of other scenarios where job-sharing has worked.

Two administrative assistants in the legal department of an insurance company share

an administrative assistant job, because one is going back to school part-time and spending more time with her two school-aged sons and the other is starting a home-based business.

An associate director of development at a large New York City hospital shares her job with a freelance writer, who temporarily took over for her while she was on maternity leave. Three months after the baby was born, the associate director wanted to come back to work—but not on a full-time basis. The writer, who enjoyed her three-month stint but didn't want full-time work because she was writing a book, also liked the idea.

A sales manager for a paper manufacturer was feeling pressured as a result of care-giving responsibilities associated with her mother's declining health. She considered resigning, until she hit on another plan. One of her recent top-notch salespeople had retired and admitted to missing the work environment. When the sales manager suggested job-sharing to the retiree, the retiree jumped at the opportunity. The retiree had a smoother and more comfortable transition out of the work force, and the manager had precious time to spend with her mother during her last days.

Dawn Porter says that she has a hazy image of herself going back full time, but when asked how soon, she jokingly equivocates by answering, "When I'm very thin," or "When the house is very clean." It's pretty obvious that neither Dawn nor Barbara is rushing back to the crushing schedules of yore. Because they have sufficient household income, this arrangement wraps around their lives perfectly—for now. Will it last forever? Who knows?

Would job-sharing work for you? Maybe not now. But, at some stage in your career, it just might provide the personal and professional balance that you need. □

Patricia Schiff Estess is the author of "Work Concepts for the Future: Managing Alternative Work Arrangements" (Crisp Publications, \$12.95) and runs a workshop series on reinventing retirement. You can contact her at pgestess@aol.com.

THE SINGLE MOM'S FINANCE SURVIVAL GUIDE

A Recipe for Lemonade in Case Life Hands You—and Your Sweet Baby—Lemons

By Elizabeth Lewin

Photo by Stockbyte

"Necessity is the mother of invention." A single mom must have been the first person to make that observation.

"When you're handed lemons, make lemonade" is another one of those expressions people use to explain how they got through tough times.

For single moms, struggling to come up with enough money to pay for the bare necessities for themselves and their children, the lemonade can be bittersweet and "inventing" ways to make and save enough money to keep their kids safe and still somehow realize their own dreams is the name of the game.

Nearly 10 million women are raising children on their own, either as a result of divorce, or widowhood, or because they were never married. Most rely on a safety net of family, friends, neighbors and financial aid or loans until they can establish themselves. "It takes a village . . ." to raise a child, as Hillary Rodham Clinton pointed out in her 1996 book, "It Takes a Village, and Other Lessons Children Teach Us."

Karen learned those lessons the hard



way. Her ex-husband skipped town and never paid the alimony and child support that he owed her and their three children.

Working for a deli in a corporate park during the day, she went back to school at night, attending a community college, so that she would be able to get a better-paying job to support her family.

She considered herself fortunate to have a neighbor who was willing to watch her toddler during the day, accepting the minimum wage Karen could afford to

pay her. Her other two children attended school, and Karen was usually at home soon after they got off the school bus. "I had a great employer," says Karen. "If I had to pick one of the kids up at school early, I could take him to the deli. He would sit quietly most of the time and do homework." Her boyfriend or mother watched the kids the three nights she took courses. "I didn't have one cent left over at the end of the week, but we got through it," she says.

It isn't easy being the sole parent and primary breadwinner, particularly when you don't have a profession to fall back on or you're blindsided by events that you are unprepared for. The following guideposts →



may help you find your way on the road to independence.

What Goes Out . . . As a single mom, supporting yourself and your children on a limited income, it's crucial to come up with a budget, or spending plan. Think of it as a cash flow problem: What goes out must come in. If you're newly divorced, your new spending plan will probably have to reflect tighter circumstances. Following a divorce, as a result of the wage gap and the loss of her husband's income, a woman's standard of living drops an average of 30 percent in five years, while a man's rises eight percent.

Before you create a budget, you need to know how much you're currently spending. Start by keeping track of your daily expenses for several months. If you have a computer, use a software program like Quicken to help you. When you're calculating your expenses, don't get caught up in the small change. Round figures up or down. The weekly train pass or dry cleaning that cost \$10.75 can be rounded up to \$11.

Make a list of your fixed expenses: mortgage, real estate taxes, utilities, car payment, insurance premiums, childcare. Reviewing your checkbook can help you pinpoint your fixed expenses.

Flexible expenses vary from month to month and include groceries, eating out, clothing, personal care, entertainment, vacation, children's expenses, transportation, medical bills, and home maintenance. Your credit-card bills will help identify flexible expenses. Cash is great but it can slip through your fingers very quickly. Where did you spend the \$80 you took out of the ATM three days ago? Keep a pocket notebook in your purse or car. Jot down the amount you just spent in the drugstore.

Once you've recorded all your expenses, analyze them carefully. Ask yourself, "Do I really want to spend that much of my money on subscriptions, eating out, dry cleaning?" What is important to you? What are your priorities? Even small, incremental changes in your spending can make a real difference!

After you have done this for several months, you'll have a clear idea of where your money is going. Then you can compare your expenses to your income, set up a spending plan and move forward. Budgeting is not a one-time project; it's an on-going process. You're creating a road map or blueprint for where you want to go. So don't forget to budget in savings for education for yourself and your children, for a home, for whatever your long-term goals are.

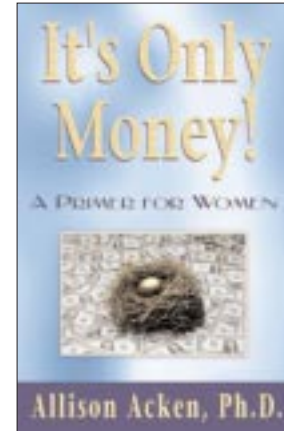
If there is more month than money, let the kids know. Children do better if they know the truth and can come up with their own money-saving ideas. Karen would take

If there is more month than money, let the kids know. Children do better if they know the truth and can come up with their own money-saving ideas.

home all the empty soda bottles from the deli. The two older kids would sort them, then return them to the store, keep some of the money they got for the returns, and throw the rest in the common pot. "They felt like they were contributing to something that was important for all of us," says Karen.

Must Come In . . . When you're creating your budget, do a tally of what income you can expect to receive: include salary, alimony, child support, Social Security, pension income, interest and dividends from investments. Don't count your chickens before they hatch—don't include a bonus that might or might not be paid at the end of the year or a family gift that was received last year but that, because of a declining stock market, may not be given this year.

Child Support. The Child Support Recovery Act of 1992 makes it a Federal crime to willfully fail to pay a past-due child-support obligation for a child living in another state. For information and counseling on your rights and how to pursue court-ordered child support from a spouse, who like Karen's husband, skipped town, or who is chronically late in paying it, contact the Child Support



Been There, Done That: Advice from a Real Expert

By Allison Acken, Ph.D.

I am the third in a line of single moms. My grandmother was a single mom during the Depression, my mother was a single mom during the late 1950s and '60s, and I was a single mom in the late '70s. Even though none of us had two nickels to rub together in all those decades, we all had a very good time, and we knew that we could count on each other when things were tough. That was true for my mom and her brothers, for my brother and me, and for my daughters.

What my grandmother and my mother understood and I learned from them about being a single mom is that you can't be the perfect parent—but you can be "good enough." And that is enough. You need to recognize that trying to give your kids everything they need, both emotionally and materially, is impossible, perhaps even in the best of times. The attempt can leave single mothers so stressed out that they have even less of themselves available to give to their kids.

A "good enough" single mom will accept that she can't be two parents, much less a village, to her kids; she'll realize that she is only one part of her children's lives. With this wisdom, she will do her best to provide a strong emotional base for her family and whatever she can provide materially (within reason), without burying herself in debt.

Having "been there and done," I know it isn't easy. Here are three tips I'd offer any mother going it alone.

1. The emotional support you give your children is priceless. Remember that the relationship that you have with your children and your kids' relationships with each other are primary. More important than any new toy or computer game or trendy outfit or athletic shoe is the emotional base that single moms build with and for their kids.

2. If you're stressed, you can't help your kids. Understand that your child's comfort is related to the stress levels in your life. If money is tight and buying a new toy is going to leave you crying over the bills at the end of the month, it really isn't worth it. What is more important to them—the new toy or having a bit more time with a happier Mom to read a book or go to the park or the beach together?

3. Accept help when you need it. Too many single moms try to tough it out alone. Just because the marriage didn't work, it doesn't mean that you can't have help or support from anybody else. Yes, the kids are your responsibility (particularly the emotional territory), but if a friend or family member offers to buy new shoes for the kids or a computer or to contribute toward their college tuition, seriously consider saying, "Yes, and thank you."

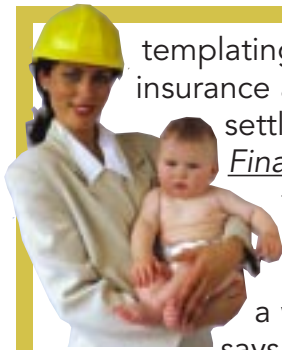
Allison Acken, Ph.D. is a psychologist, author and speaker on the subject of women and money. More information is available in her book, "It's Only Money! A Primer for Women," which is available on her Web site, www.womentalkmoney.com.

Enforcement Office in your area. You'll find it listed in your phone book, or by state, on SingleParentCentral.com (www.singleparentcentral.com/childsupport.htm).

Another option is to submit your dead-beat spouse's name to the IRS. Under the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program, you may be able to have any refunds owed him diverted to you to pay off his obligation. To

learn more about this option, contact the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, or visit SingleParentCentral.com, which has a very helpful list of frequently asked questions about this process.

If you do get child support, take out a term life insurance policy on your former spouse, so that you will have some protection in the event of his death. Those con-



templating divorce should make such insurance a provision of their divorce settlement.

Financial Assistance. Karen, though she doesn't like to talk about it, received financial assistance. "I was a welfare-to-work mom," she says. "Before I got the job in the deli, I was receiving food stamps and other allowances. While receiving assistance, I had to register for work and then accept an offer for suitable work. The amounts were decreased when I got the job, and eventually they were eliminated."

Did you know that you can submit your deadbeat spouse's name to the IRS? Under the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program, you may be able to have any refunds owed him diverted to you to pay off his obligation.

Getting assistance can be difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the Federal agency that funds state and local organizations to provide family assistance (welfare), Head Start, and other child-welfare services. To find a local office that administers these programs, check the blue pages of your telephone book under both city and state government for listings under Human Resources, Social Services, and Food Stamps. You can visit the ACF Web site at www.acf.dhhs.gov to get further information about how to apply for various assistance programs, including home energy assistance, as well as the address and phone numbers of aid organizations in your area. A food-stamp hotline is available at 1-888-863-6178.

Social Security Benefits. Betty, widowed in her early 30s, received Social Security benefits for herself and her two young sons. A benefit is paid to a widow if she is respon-

sible for children under the age of 16, and to her children. There is, however, a maximum amount paid per family. Betty worked and her benefit was reduced because of her earnings, but the children received their full benefits until they were 18 years old.

Pension Benefits. Audrey's husband was still working when he died. He had worked for several companies during his 35-year career. She wrote to the employee benefits department of each company. In each case, she was given the choice of receiving his pension as a lump sum or in monthly lifetime payments. If you have a choice as to how you will receive this money, ask for time to consult a financial planner prior to making this important decision. You can't change your mind if you decide on lifetime payments.

Plug the Leaks. Be a responsible credit-card user. You don't need more than two cards. Put small items on a card that you pay in full every month. Big-ticket items can be charged to the card that has an on-going balance. If you're carrying more than two cards, or are paying high interest on your cards, transfer your balances to one with lower finance charges and no annual fee. You'll be surprised at the amount you save. Don't put groceries on the card that carries a balance. Those groceries will be long gone before you've paid the bill off. If you are building up unpaid balances, put credit cards away. Place them in a container of water and freeze them. By the time the water defrosts, you might decide you don't need whatever it was you thought you needed.

Stay Healthy. Health insurance can be a horrendous problem and a major expense for a single mom. A widow or divorcée is generally eligible for coverage under her husband's health insurance, provided by his employer, for 18 to 36 months. You will pay the group rate plus a small premium for the period, but then you are on your own.

Ann's children were covered under their father's policy until they were out of college, but Ann had to find coverage for herself when she was no longer insured on her ex-husband's plan. She started a consulting business. "I joined the local Chamber of

Commerce, only because they offered a medical plan to their members," says Ann. The rates are cheaper if you can participate as part of a group.

"My first consideration," recalls Karen, "was to get a job with a company that had good benefits. I was lucky that there was no major medical crisis during the time that my kids and I were uninsured."

Each state has a health-insurance program for uninsured infants, children, and teenagers. Yet a recent survey reported that six out of 10 parents whose uninsured children qualify for such aid did not believe those free or low-cost programs applied to them.

Each state has a health-insurance program for uninsured infants, children, and teenagers, who are eligible for low-cost or free coverage through State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP) or Medicaid. Yet a recent survey reported that six out of 10 parents whose uninsured children qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP did not believe those free or low-cost public coverage programs applied to them. The insurance is available to children of working families. Medicaid is available for the very poor. Each state has its own eligibility rules. Your children might be eligible in one state but not in another. For more information, log onto www.insurekidsnow.gov and www.coveringkids.org. You'll find eligibility requirements for each state. Or call 1-877-KIDS-NOW.

The Biggest Expense. According to Ann Douglas, author of "The Unofficial Guide to Childcare" (Wiley, 1998), "child-care is likely to be one of your family's largest expenses—at least until your kids start school. Your childcare costs will be higher for an infant or toddler than for a preschooler." The cost will depend on where you live and the type of care—in-home or out-of-home care.

Ellen had in-home care for Eric. In addi-

tion to paying Maria's salary, she paid Social Security withholding (FICA) for her. There are lower-cost alternatives, however, that might work for you. Karen took her toddler to a neighbor, paying her minimum wage. Other women have organized neighborhood day-care centers, run by mothers who volunteer their time. If you work for a large corporation, lobby for day-care benefits or a corporate day care center in the building. Check whether any of the churches in your neighborhood offer low-cost day-care programs. And, by all means, investigate whether you are eligible for state child-care subsidies.

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that only 1.5 million of the 9.9 million children who are eligible for child-care subsidies under their states' eligibility guidelines receive assistance. To find out if you are eligible, contact your county Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) office, which should be listed in the blue pages of your phone book. Your local Childcare Resource and Referral Agency (also listed in your phone book) may also be able to give you a list of day-care providers that offer scholarships.

Be Happy. When you're trimming your budget, leave just a little extra for fun for yourself and your children. Build in some play money for activities that feed your soul, reduce stress, or improve your emotional life. Search for free ways to have fun with your children in your local newspaper. Tickets to cultural events or eating out might seem extravagant, but anything that gives you a break from your kids and lets you spend some much-needed time with adult friends is worth it. Join a support group—or start one.

Hold a monthly single-moms' idea exchange at your place—and serve lemonade! □

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RICH FRIENDS POOR FRIENDS



Don't Let MONEY Come Between You!

Can Your Nearest and Dearest Pass This Writer's Test of True-Blue Friendship?



The author (right) with her (still) best friend, Macy

By Elizabeth Kaminsky

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be."
—William Shakespeare

"I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better."
—Sophie Tucker

On the subject of money and friendship, the quotes and advice are endless. Most sources guard against mingling the two, but we need both to sustain us throughout our lives. How do we manage to maintain the relationships that we value, when our values about money, or money itself, sometimes get in the way? Can rich people and poor people really form lasting friendships? Or do envy and class issues get in the way? Are friends who manage to reach across that great green

divide forever doomed to be seen as the odd couples of society?

My first exposure to these questions goes all the way back to childhood. My friend Macy and I met in the first grade and had (almost) everything in common. We went to the same elementary school. We were only children, and we were both smart, shy little girls. The biggest difference? Macy lived in a four-bedroom, center-hall colonial with a pool, next to a country club. I lived in a two-bedroom, rent-controlled apartment for low-income families. For most of our childhood, I never felt that we were different. Both of our families were generous, kind and loving. Sure, she had all the latest Barbie paraphernalia, but I had jacks, roller skates and a Mom who made pancakes in

the shape of Mickey Mouse. For us, it all evened out. She and I had fun in each other's worlds, and the line between rich and poor was blurred by our friendship.

I made it all the way to age 16 before the reality of being a "poor kid from the projects" sank in. I started dating a boy from school, and one afternoon I gave directions to his father, so that they could pick me up. As I was describing the turns and landmarks, he said, "Your house must be right near the housing projects, dear." I replied, "I don't live in a house. I live on Herbert Avenue in Brick Manor, Number 3731-A." His silence spoke volumes. I knew instantly that he thought I wasn't from the "right side of the tracks." The boy and his family never treated me the same way after that. There was always a look of sadness or mistrust in their eyes—I was never sure which. The label they'd hung on me weighed me down.

'We joke about Yuppies, Dinks, Boomers or Soccer Moms. There are blue collars and pink collars, pickup trucks and SUV's. We seem to have a million ways to categorize people. Sometimes, a change in status can get you thrown out of the club.'

Playing the Label Game

As an adult, I've worked hard and had my share of personal and professional success. I've learned to measure my self-worth by things other than where I live or what people think of me and to try not to judge others by the labels that society places on them. Still, even in our "politically correct," democratic society, unfortunately, labels of wealth and class persist. Some are subtle, others blatant and offensive; still others are humorous. We joke about people being Yuppies, Dinks, Boomers or Soccer Moms; wearing blue collars and pink collars; driving pickup trucks and SUV's. There are still two sides to those proverbial tracks. We seem to

have a million ways to categorize people by their status in life. Sometimes, a change in status can get you thrown out of the "club." Other times, jealousy over money can mark the end of a relationship. For richer or poorer, for better or worse, there's no doubt that money can color our adult friendships, if we let it. Sometimes, as the women I spoke with for this article told me, money helps us determine who our real friends are.

'It was the loneliest time in my life. I realized that I had essentially been buying the friendship of these women, and when the money ran out, so did they.'

Carol, 47, was always pretty successful. She came from an upper-middle class family, went to an Ivy League school, and landed a lucrative job with an investment firm. To fit in within her new community, she befriended other mothers from her daughter's school, many of whom were struggling to make ends meet. Since she was more solvent than the rest, she frequently treated the other Moms to lunch or hosted parties for them at her home. Shelling out the dough was expected of her. When her firm fell on hard times and her income dropped, she found it more difficult to live up to her so-called friends' expectations. She recalls, "It was the loneliest time in my life. I realized that I had essentially been buying the friendship of these women, and when the money ran out, so did they."

Job layoffs or salary reductions aren't the only ways that a woman's perceived status can change. After a divorce, an income drop often causes women to move or take on extra jobs to make ends meet. Many women I talked with had bitter memories of the ways their friendships changed after divorce. They described feeling "marked" and "left out" because their marital and financial status seemed to be the only glue that had been holding certain friendships together. One woman remarked, "I felt like I was wear-

ing a Scarlet Letter, and it made me angry to think that people could be so superficial.”

It Isn't Always Easy Being Green

The transition from poor to rich isn't any easier. Janet, 43, started her career with a group of women in the customer-service department of a large company. They socialized and supported each other for several years. When Janet got a big promotion, things changed, however. "In the beginning, everyone was happy for me," she remembers. "But as I started to enjoy the fruits of my hard work, we grew further apart. They would comment disparagingly on my new car or my new wardrobe and accuse me of not remembering where I came from. I remembered, all right, and I'd never want to be associated with women who would drag someone down just to make themselves feel better."

But let's not kid ourselves: moving up the money ladder does provide some perks, friendship-wise and otherwise. Ann, 57, relates: "I was delighted to be able to splurge on myself and my friends after my lawsuit settlement came through. I felt like we were the women on *Sex and the City*, sporting our Manolo Blahnik shoes. My friends have a ball helping me spend the money, but none of them take advantage. They are all very appreciative and they reciprocate in other ways, like watching my son or taking care of our cat while we're away. I don't feel like the money has changed me too much, and my friends seem to agree."

The Test of True Friendship

Like these women, I'm sure that each of you has a story about how having money—either too much or too little—changed a major relationship in your life. Most people would agree that while having money is great, having a true friend is priceless. Here are some things to consider when examining the value of each of your friendships:

1. Does It Have "Heart-worthiness"? Do you know what you and your friend are made of? At the core, do you connect on the big things, like values and belief systems? Are you each other's first call to share



'Months can elapse, and my childhood friend Macy is still the first person I call when I need someone to understand me without question.'

life's joys or disappointments? Can you love and honor each other without judgment?

2. Does It Have Trustworthiness? Is your friendship based on honesty and integrity? Do you take responsibility for your actions within the friendship? Are you generous with praise and gentle with criticism? Do you follow through on promises and commitments?

3. Does It Have "Fun-worthiness"? Do you enjoy each other's company, no matter what you are doing—talking on the phone, walking in the park, waiting in line, etc.? Will you try new things for each other's sake? Do you share interests and value your differences?

Using these measurements, you can evaluate the "net worth" of your friendships to see if they have what it takes to last through thick and thin. On this yardstick, my friendship with Macy measures up. We have lasted through my career highs and lows, through her divorce, through children born and parents lost. Months can elapse, and she is still the first person I'll call when I need someone to understand me without question. We can pick up right where we left off, every time. I wouldn't begin to know how to put a price on that.

The Greek historian Herodotus once said, "Of all possessions, a friend is the most precious." I couldn't agree more—and you can take that to the bank. □

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FUNNY BUSINESS

I've Always Had Hair to Dye for...

Getting in Touch with My Roots May Save Me a Bundle, but Will I End Up Looking Like My Mother?



The author: No garden-variety writer.

By Victoria Secunda

It is a hallmark of my maturity that I am coming to terms with my hair. Second only to figuring out my mother (let's not go there), this evolutionary milestone fills me with the greatest pride. Where once the stuff that grows above my eyebrows caused me no end of angst—think Brillo jokes—now, having spent eons watching my hair stylist, Laura, wield a hair blower, I can heat my hair into submission. (Never mind that this endeavor takes 30 minutes in front of my bathroom mirror, holding my hands in the air until I can't feel them anymore, and that, if it rains, I'm kink city.)

Fortuitously, this follicular epiphany has coincided with and been nourished by the dismal economy, leading to yet another epiphany: If I could conquer the frizz, even temporarily, maybe I could take the final step toward self-actualization by calling it quits with dye jobs, letting my hair grow in—thereby exposing its actual hue (green? beats me)—and eliminating the monthly coloring tab, which sets me back roughly \$800 per annum.

I am not the first person to come up with the idea of dumping dye jobs for dollars. Indeed, all but one of my friends stopped having their hair colored years ago, some because the upkeep was a drag, but most because they couldn't justify the expense. A pal of mine, who is now in the chips, fell into this latter category a decade ago, when she

I am not the first person to come up with the idea of dumping dye jobs for dollars. Millions of women, young and old, have always known that if you have to choose between the colorist and the rent, bag the hair.

was booted from her cushy job, owing to a bald billionaire who decimated the company in a grumpy takeover. She did not get her hair cut or colored for the 10 months it took her to land a similar job.

Like my friend, millions of women, young and old, have always known that if you have to choose between the colorist and the rent, bag the hair. How droll, then, to find that the vaunted *New York Times* has only recently discovered herein a business trend. According to an October 7 article on page one of the Metro Section, the beauty-parlor business has suffered a thousand cuts since the stock market began its long dive. (Duh.) Customers, *The Times* went on to say, aren't getting highlights and assorted other tweakings as often as they did in the heady days of IPO's and standing weekly appointments for root work.

Still, making the ultimate coiffural sacrifice when the hair color in question might end up being salt and pepper is not the same as facing the mousy music in one's salad years. Which is where we pick up the thread of my personal hair journey.

Several weeks ago I enlisted Laura, the aforementioned hair stylist, to implement my plan to liberate my locks from their faux tinting. For the next six months, while the true hair, the "me" hair—okay, the old hair—comes in, she will insert washout coloring to tide me over during the half-year transition from brunette to whatever. She will also give me my customary short haircut (you think I have all day to stand in front of a mirror with my hairdryer?), little by little eliminating the permanently dyed part.

We are now two months into this adventure. I call it that, because I've had the same hairdo for 15 years, am entirely sick of it, and crave a new look. But I'm also taking a huge and incredibly time-intensive gamble that my hair passage will have a felicitous payoff—that the resultant color will end up being more snow than slush, more fox than hound.

Ge. Maybe I'll look like Carmen, the silver-haired, spectacularly gorgeous über-model. Wait. I might look like Henry Kissinger. Oh, God. What if I look like my

Who was kidding whom when my hair color remained of child-bearing age, while my face slogged through menopause?

mother? Oh, well, at least my face and tresses will be of the same vintage (who was kidding whom when my hair color remained of child-bearing age, while my face slogged through menopause?), and I'll get points for character.

Anyhow, Laura has given me an irresistible carrot to prod me on. She says that when I finally stop dying my hair, she can straighten it (if you do both at the same time, she says, your hair falls off), and then I can let it continue to grow past my earlobes, right down to chin level, a process that will take, door-to-door, roughly 12 months. And then—oh, happy day!—if the weather is foul, I can tie it back with a banana clip or even let it loose, and sayonara Kramer hair. I am pumped.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "This woman should get out more." Don't you get it? I would go out more if I had

straight hair. Hair like my 33-year-old daughter's. Her glossy, glorious mane, so thick she needs two hands to hold it all, cascades to her waist. At work, she wears it wrapped in a knot. But at the end of the day, say, over drinks at a pub, when, like Rapunzel, she

lets it down, I'm telling you, heads turn. Grown men grasp railings for support. Women hiss, "You can't have any friends, not with hair like that."

Okay, so I'll never have perfect hair. But since my options are either chestnut nerve endings or gray do-anything-with-them hanks, I'm pouncing on the latter. So what if in a year's time I look my age? At least, I'll finally have what my husband calls "throwy" hair, I can toss my baseball caps in the garbage, and I'll be the very picture of seasoned self-acceptance.

(Note to self: Install 15-watt light bulbs in bathroom.) □

Victoria Secunda is an award-winning author whose latest book is "Losing Your Parents, Finding Your Self" (Hyperion). She is the executive editor of MAKING BREAD and will be up to more "Funny Business" in future issues of the magazine.