Taking a Minute to Win Your Relationship

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With these relationship tips, you and your partner will both come out winners!

Win-Win Situation

Experiences in my life have led me to appreciate the moments I have with those I love. I'm especially grateful for my husband who I had to search long and hard for. I can't say that I don't EVER take him for granted, but I know how hard it was for me to find him; and I want to make sure that he's around for a long time. So, besides encouraging him to replace fast food with veggies and to exercise with me, I also try to keep the love alive by doing little things that are easy and don't take much time but that let him know how much he means to me. I thought I'd share a few of the ideas I've tried (or plan on trying) to help keep the relationship spark.

- Take silly pictures of each other and laugh together.
- When he/she is sharing something with you, give him/her your undivided attention (I admit I need to work on this!).
- Give a silly gift at an unexpected time.
- Flirt with each other.
- Leave a sticky note or note card somewhere that tells about how much you love and appreciate your partner.
- Share one thing you are thankful for about each other before going to bed each night.
- On a trip somewhere in the car, kiss at every red light or stop sign.
- Stop whatever you are doing to enjoy the sunset together.
- Send a text or email just to say hi.
- Surprise him/her with a favorite treat.

What are the small things you do to keep the spark in your relationship? What new idea are you willing to try this week? Check out some other ideas on how to make every moment you have together count at

http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/Marria ge&Relationships_2013-01pr.pdf.

This article was written by Naomi Brower, Weber County Director/Extension Associate, Weber County

Food Storage Factors



Make sure your food storage is safe and ready to use so you can utilize it in any situation-even in an emergency!

Food for Thought

Storing food is a traditional domestic skill that has been used for thousands of years in times of plenty to prepare for times of famine or when food is in short supply. Wheat found stored in vessels in the tombs of Egypt was still edible after 4,000 years. Food is preserved and stored to be eaten from harvest to harvest as families strive to be self-sustainable. Maintaining a food supply often ensures savings of time and money and provides safety and security in time of need. Storing food has several main purposes:

- Preserves harvested and processed foods for later use
- Provides a balanced diet throughout the year
- Helps prepare for disasters, emergencies, and periods of food scarcity or famine
- Religious reasons
- Peace of mind
- Self-sustainability

Factors that affect food storage:

Temperature: The temperature at which food is stored is very critical to shelf life. The best range for food storage is a constant temperature between 40-60 degrees. Avoid freezing temperatures.

Moisture: It is recommended to remove moisture when storing foods. For long-term storage, foods should have a 10 percent or less moisture content.

Oxygen: Foods store best when oxygen free.

Light: Light transfers energy to the food products causing

them to degrade in nutrition and appearance. Store food in dark areas.

Container: Store foods in food-grade plastic, metal or glass containers indicating that the container does not contain chemicals that could be transferred to food and be harmful to your health.

For best storage life, use containers with a hermetic (air tight) seal. Containers with air-tight seals are:

- #10 cans
- Sealable food storage buckets
- Sealable food quality metal (lined) or plastic drums
- Foil pouches
- PETE bottles (for dry products such as wheat, corn, and beans)

Infestation: Insects can damage your food storage. Prevent these with cold treatments and proper storage conditions.

Shelf date is the "best if used by" date. The "life sustaining shelf life" date means the length of time that food is still edible. "Sell by" means the store should sell the product by the printed date. "Best if used by" means the consumer should use the product by the date listed for best quality and flavor (not for safety reasons).

Utah State University Extension: http://extension.usu.edu/foodstorage/htm/storage-conditions

This article was written by Carolyn Washburn, Extension Agent, Washington County

Container Gardening // 7 Tips that Thrill, Fill and Spill



The potential of your garden is limitless with container gardening. Try out these tips to keep your garden ever growing, changing and blooming in style.

Contained Beauty

Container gardening has become popular as planting areas in the landscape have become smaller. Some containers are used to grow vegetables or specimen shrubs, while others display a beautiful splash of color. For thrilling container gardens, consider these tips.

- Containers need large enough drainage holes in the bottom to prevent soil from clogging the hole while still promoting proper drainage. If the drainage hole is too large, soil will leak through the bottom each time the container is watered. Prevent this problem by placing a large rock or solid object over the hole. This allows water to drain around it and keeps the soil in place.
- Planters must be large enough to accommodate the root system of the plants. Often, annuals or vegetable plants are crammed into a small planter, and then gardeners wonder why the plants stay small or need excessive amounts of water. As a general rule, any pot 8 inches or smaller in diameter will only hold small plants. Most annual or perennial containers should be a minimum of 8 to 10 inches in diameter, and larger pots are more desirable. After all, the goal of having annuals is to make a large splash of color in the landscape, not a dribble.
- There is an art to designing annual containers, often referred to as thrill, fill and spill. This refers to the principle of placing an upright plant in the center of the container that "thrills" the eye and draws attention. Next, the planter is "filled" with an accenting color and finally

one or two plants are placed to "spill" over the sides to soften the appearance and extend the color.

- The spike dracaena is commonly used as a center "thrill" for planters; however, many other plants work equally well to catch the eye. Some include red fountain grass, snapdragons, geraniums, salvia, coleus and dahlias. These plants reach a height of 8 inches or more and stand out in a crowd of annuals.
- There are a number of good choices for "filling" a container with annuals. The most important consideration is to select colors and flowers you like. Next, keep in mind that they should not overpower the plant used to "thrill" nor hide the plants that "spill." Osteospermum, million bells, bidden, some zinnias and impatiens work well.
- For plants that "spill," there is the black-eyed Susan vine, wave petunias, sweet potato vine, licorice plant, alyssum and lobelia. Some of these plants also climb, which can be both a plus and a problem when they attempt to take over the basket or move up a post. For this reason, flower baskets should be pruned as needed.
- A critical component in the container is the soil. It should hold water, but also drain. A number of good potting soils are available at local nurseries and garden centers. Keep in mind that you get what you pay for when purchasing potting soil. Along with the proper soil, it is important to provide the plants with sufficient fertilizer. Normally this means either applying a slow-release fertilizer at planting time or using a water-soluble fertilizer every couple of weeks.

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Ask an Expert // 7 Ways to Identify Money Wasters

LIVE WELL UTAH



Have you ever been caught in the trap of wasting money? Find out how you can escape!

A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned

In a recent article, financial guru Dave Ramsey identified the Top 10 things Americans wasted money on in 2015. His list includes: student loans, Ziosk tablets at restaurants, gym memberships, daily coffee trips, car payments, car leasing, car wash upgrades, name-brand household paper products, timeshares and shipping charges.

While this is his personal perspective, assessing our own personal money wasters over the year is a worthwhile activity. Here's how to do it.

*Get out receipts or go online to your bank account (or bank statements if you have them) and start adding up expenses in specific categories such as clothing, food, entertainment, gas, etc.

*Total each category for the entire year. This will take some time if you have not been tracking through the year, but it is critical if you want to change the way you handle money.

*This last part is the most useful, and that is to ask yourself some key questions to identify money wasters:

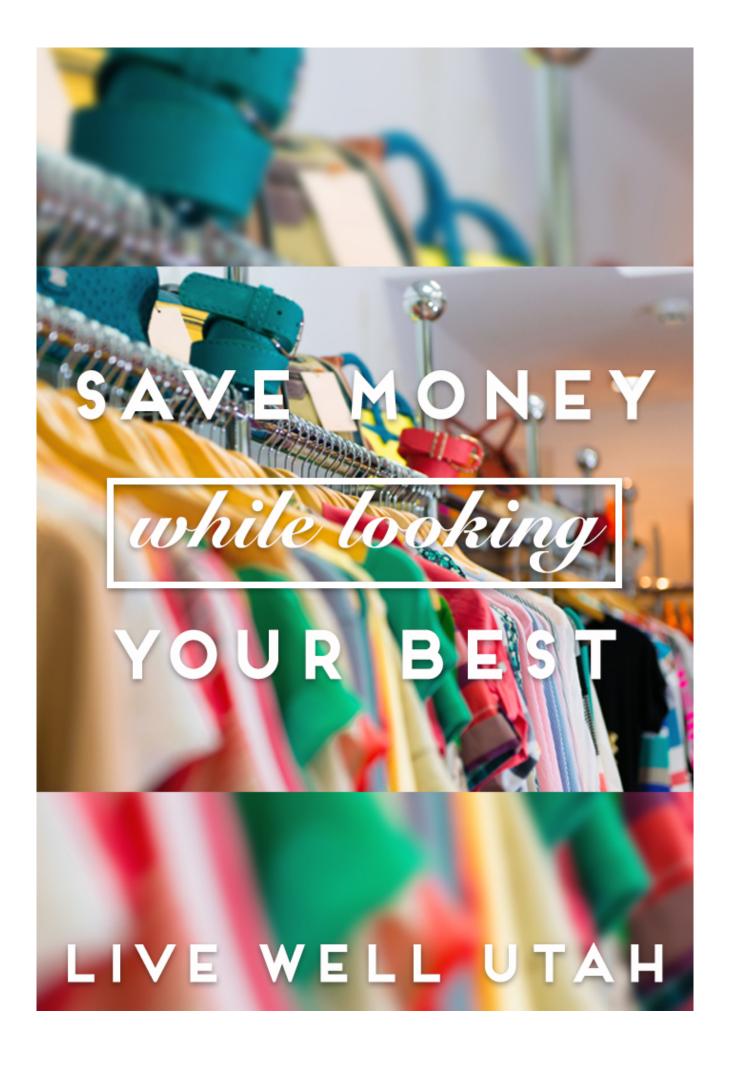
- 1) Did we need to spend this much?
- 2) What traps did we fall into?
- 3) Did we get into loans that, with some planning, we could have saved for to avoid the interest costs? Could we have put more money down or found a better interest rate? (Or avoided a loan altogether?)

- 4) Did we enter into contracts for products or services that we didn't realistically think through? (The long-term implications can get us in trouble.)
- 5) Do we currently have little habits that add up to a considerable dollar amount when multiplied by the frequency?
- 6) Are we guilty of the "I earned it, I deserve it" mentality?
- 7) Is the price of convenience being forgotten in our budget and dollar equations?

It can be helpful to assess where we are financially, based on current habits we may have gotten into, then determine if there are better ways our resources could be spent in the coming year. Ramsey's list provides us some great things to consider for our own budget as well as a path to step down some of our own expenses.

This article was written by Teresa Hunsaker, Utah State University Extension educator, teresa.hunsaker@usu.edu, 801-399-8200

10 ways to save while looking your best!



Looking your best is an important part of your image. But it doesn't have to break the bank. You can look amazing and save at the same time.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), the average American spent \$1,700 on apparel and related services in 2010. Even though the last statistic on consumer expenditures was released in 2010, the current economic situation can suggest that Americans are interested in ways to save money on apparel to maintain a certain look for personal and professional life.

Here are 10 ways that individuals and families can save money on apparel and clothing related items.

- 1. Consider the quality and durability of the new clothing that you purchase. Clothing that is well constructed and sturdy will last longer than some of the inexpensive choices available. Choose those few pieces that add to your wardrobe, not take it in a new direction.
- 2. When purchasing new clothing, consider buying items that mix and match with clothing that you already own. By selecting classic choices, you broaden the use and versatility of your wardrobe.
- 3. If you have extra time, shopping at consignment or thrift stores can open up your wardrobe creatively and affordably.
- 4. Watch out for metal hangers. They stretch your clothing out of shape. Use wooden or plastic hangers depending on the fibers of your clothing.
- 5. Gather your friends and family and host a clothing swap where you can trade clothing with those you know. With more people involved, the better selection you will have.
- 6. Before purchasing, simply ask yourself, "Do I need this?" If you make a list before you go shopping, it

will be easier to stick to it.

- 7. Natural fibers may require more attention by the wearer (ironing, etc), but synthetic fibers can wear out faster and don't always wear as well.
- 8. Buying clothing at an outlet mall doesn't always mean you are getting the best deal. Comparing prices before you purchase can save you money in the long run.
- 9. We all have those items that we don't wear anymore, but are still in great shape. Sell previously loved clothing from your closet to free up space and create a funding source for new clothing.
- 10. The more you wash your clothing, the faster it will wear out. Make sure you treat stains quickly to prevent them from becoming permanent. Avoid clothing that is dry clean only, as going to the cleaners frequently can be expensive.

This article was written by Margie Memmott and Lindsey Shirley, USU Extension.

5 Ways to Use a Bonus, Gift or Tax Refund



It's that time of year again. Many people will be getting tax returns (or already have) and are looking for the best ways to use that money as well as other "extra" money they have received.

Many of us hope for a windfall or a large gift or bonus. However, more than likely, most of us will be hoping for a tax refund this time of year. Here are five ways to consider using your tax refund (or gift or bonus).

- 1. Add it to your Savings. Whether you are saving for a particular item or event such as a vacation, new baby or retirement, your savings account is a great place for any extra money you receive. Powerpay.org can help you set savings goals, help you with steps to reach them and also find resources to help you with overall financial goals.
- 2. Reduce Debt. If you have any debt, this is also an important category to pay attention to. Powerpay.org can be an especially useful tool to help you power your way out of debt. There is also an iOS app for PowerPay. These tools will help you determine which

- debts should be paid first and outcomes if you pay different amounts on each debt.
- 3. Contribute to your Posterity's Future. Set up or contribute to a college fund, wedding plans or other event for your children or grandchildren. The Utah Educational Savings Plan can be a tool for college savings. Be sure you understand the details before participating.
- 4. Charitable Giving. If you decide to contribute to a charity, be sure to check a website such as Charity Navigator or Charity Watch before donating.
- 5. Create or Add to an Emergency Fund. If you don't have one, do what you can to get one started. This can be a useful tool to help keep you out of debt. Any amount can be helpful to start with and add to. A minimum to aim for should be \$1,000, and recommended is three to six months of your income.

Four Basic Veggie Categories & When It's Safe to Plant Them



Flowers are blooming, the sun is shining and temperatures are rising. Spring is in the air! But don't let that fool you, frost can still happen. Read on for ways to know when it's okay to get your garden planted so you can avoid the frosty pitfalls.

Spring has sprung, but frost still likely!

Determining when to plant a garden can be especially confusing in Utah's unpredictable, varied climate where last-frost dates can vary by many days within just a few miles. Many experienced gardeners have planted and later lost their plants to frost.

An example of how fickle Utah's climate can be is in Cache Valley. Frost-free days vary from an average of 113 days in Lewiston and Trenton to 158 days on the USU campus. Similar examples are common around the state.

Geographic characteristics of where you live can help in determining when to plant. When a yard is located in a

populated area or on a mountain bench, it usually has a longer growing season. Other areas located at slightly lower elevations where cold air drains and cannot escape have a shorter season. This is why local commercial orchards are generally located on benches. Additionally, urban and suburban areas are slightly warmer than surrounding areas due to the urban heat effect. Heat from buildings and warmth generated by sunlight reflected from roads and other surfaces increases temperatures and delays frost. It can be helpful to chat with a local farmer or experienced gardener in your area to determine what works for him or her regarding when to plant.

In addition to frost information, it is important to take into account the needs of the plants. Vegetables planted locally fall into four basic categories: hardy, semi-hardy, tender and very tender. Depending on which category a plant belongs to, planting dates vary from early spring until early summer. Consider the following:

- Hardy vegetables, including asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, onions, peas and spinach, can be planted as soon as the soil is workable in early spring. This usually ranges between 45 and 60 days before the average last frost. These same vegetables can be safely planted until the average last frost date.
- Semi-hardy plants, such as beets, carrots, lettuce and potatoes, can be planted one to two weeks after the hardy group. These can be planted until the average last-frost date.
- Tender vegetables, such as celery, cucumbers, corn and most beans, should be planted on the average last-frost date.
- Very tender plants, such as squash, beans, melons, tomatoes, eggplants and peppers, should not be planted until at least a week after the average last frost. Even if frost does not occur before this time, these plants will not grow well and are more susceptible to disease

until warmer weather.

If you have lost plants to frost, you are not alone, and all you can do is try again.

This article was written by Taun Beddes, Utah State University Extension horticulturist.