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Greetings

How are your commitments these days? Are you meeting yourself coming and going? How many things have you said yes to when your mind was screaming NO? Are you working to your strengths? Any habits you would like to break? What about the good habits you have, do you allow them to work to your advantage? Do you remember to give yourself a pat on the back for those good habits and routines? And, why all these questions?

Yesterday I played hooky from my office, though not really from work. I spent the day at the University of Idaho Women’s Leadership Conference. The conference title was “Yes, and… The Power of We.” Our theme speaker was Jessica Bearman. She is a founding member of the Moscow Women’s Giving Circle, a local women’s philanthropy group that supports deserving non-profit organizations in Latah County. She gave us five points to address when we say yes to doing something. Yes And… “I am a right person,” “here’s how I’ll show up,” “I can make it work better,” “here’s what’s missing,” and finally Yes And… “NO.” That last one is probably the toughest. I cannot do the presentation justice but would like to summarize her 5 points.

The first point did not really hit me until she pointed out that it says “a” right person not the right person. Not too long ago I read and discussed with colleagues some of the research focused on the “imposter” mind set, especially in women. Have any of the rest of you had the thought cross your mind that someday “they are going to find out I really am not good enough to...” or “they are going to figure out I am a fraud and I really can’t...” Her whole point on being a right person is to allow ourselves to recognize we are one of the people with skill, knowledge, ability to do the job. Own that skill, knowledge and ability and move forward, but do not forget to ask the next three points.

How will I show up? Will I be there as my authentic self, or the person I think others expect me to be? She gave appearance as one example. She attended the conference in what we in apparel and textiles would refer to as business casual. Someone had asked her about wearing a suit or wearing her shoulder length curly/wavy hair pulled back for a more “grown up and professional” look. The crowd laughed, evidently we got her point. How will you show up?

Maybe some of you have been asked to repeat one program or presentation you have given before. Do you think about “how can I make it work better?” What if you are asked to present information on something you have observed a colleague doing? We need to consider how to make that information our own. How to improve on that program we developed, or what additional information can be included to improve on what we do.

When asked to do something do we have all the information we need to do a good job? That is the point of “here’s what’s missing.” I am sure many of us have heard the old “never assume anything, you’ll just make” statement. This one really hit home for me. We are organizing a panel presentation and a keynote for this year’s Alumni Brunch. The theme for the panel presentation for faculty, students, and community is Human Trafficking. I was caught off guard when one of our speakers replied to my confirmation message with a list of questions among which were things like, number of people expected, an itinerary for the day, will there be time for Q&A. I should have been prepared for that; those are questions I would have if asked. But it did catch me a bit off guard. Our speaker just wants us to fill in the “here’s what’s missing” piece.
The last point is probably one of the most difficult for many of us, myself included. I want to say yes to doing something because I value the cause or know it is a topic I can cover (and have the passion for) with little effort. However one more yes and my already very full schedule would be beyond the over committed stage if I say yes. How do I say no but still support the cause or the event? Do you have your Yes And… No “elevator pitch” prepared. If not, I suggest you start to develop one. Because of Annual Conference I had to say no to a request here on campus. It is something I would really like to do, but I am already scheduled to be in Boise (Also something I really want to do). My reply went something like this “What fun, but may I have a raincheck? I will be out of town, but this is something I would really enjoy doing.” The reply I received: “Sonya, I will keep you on the list for next year.” Done and Done.

This keynote address was a great Segway into the workshops I attended later in the day, especially two of them. The first session was based on the book *The Power of Habit.* That is a book that has been on and off my reading list for some time. After attending that session it is now back on my list. Although there was a lot of attention given to our individual habits, the presenters also spoke about our cultural habits. These are the “we’ve always done it that way” habits of work, home, social, community. It gave me some incentive to restructure our faculty meetings. One of the FCS faculty also attended this session, and now I have put in writing the intention she heard me say. Guess I need to start restructuring.

All four of the workshops I attended provided valuable information for me, but the other one that really resonated with me was one on identifying our strengths. I am sure many of you have taken the Myers Briggs assessment. I know some of you have also participated in the Colors assessment. But the assessment used for this session was not one with which I was familiar. I believe it is one based on work by John Holland, but I was too busy participating to pay attention to what the leaders said about the source. What surprised me the most on this assessment was the strength that ranked the highest for me. It is one that lately I have not felt it was my strength. In fact I have done a pretty good job of beating myself due to it being a weak-

ness. I recommend you take time to reassess your strengths from time to time, then ask yourself if you are fulfilling your own potential.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Boise for Annual Conference.
Parenting Style and Children’s Development

Research shows that the quality of mother-child relationships greatly influences children’s development socially, emotionally and academically. Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of promoting children’s autonomy, available research often has not addressed ways parental respect for autonomy may affect parent-child relationships. Now, University of Missouri researchers have found that mothers who support their children’s need for autonomy as the children grow tend to be viewed more positively by their children.

“When mothers are highly controlling of small children’s play, those children are less likely to want to engage with them,” said study author Jean Ispa. “Respect for autonomy is important, not only for children’s growth, but also for creating positive parent-child relationships. We found that mothers who supported their children’s autonomy were regarded more positively by their children than mothers who were highly directive.”

Ispa’s study, which included more than 2,000 mothers and their children, measured maternal directiveness—or the extent to which mothers controlled activities—in play when children were 2 years old and then during a discussion about areas of disagreement when the children were in the fifth grade. Ispa found that mothers’ tendencies to display controlling behaviors predicted the extent to which the children viewed their mothers positively or negatively when the children were in fifth grade, results that did not differ by ethnicity or gender of the children.

“Ispa said allowing children levels of autonomy does not mean parents should stop setting ground rules or providing input. She stated that behavioral controls, such as teaching children not to cross the street without first checking for cars, did not negatively impact mother-child relationships as did psychological controls, like purposely inducing guilt or telling children to think, feel and play in certain ways.

“Many times, parents think that employing these controlling behaviors is the ‘right way’ to raise children, but our research shows that really does not work,” Ispa said. “Allowing children age-appropriate levels of autonomy to make safe decisions is very good for kids, and they usually will make wise decisions when they have been taught about safe choices as well as consequences. A good place for parents to start would be to have open discussions and allow their children to express their own points of view. When giving children instructions, explain reasons for decisions rather than simply saying, ‘Because I said so.’”


Keyword: parenting.
Longer Work Hours for Moms Mean Less Sleep, Higher BMIs for Preschoolers

The majority of preschoolers may not be getting the amount of sleep they need each night, placing them at higher risk of being overweight or obese within a year, according to a new study.

Research at the University of Illinois investigated links between mothers' employment status and their children's weight over time, exploring the impact of potential mediators, such as children's sleep and dietary habits, the amount of time they spent watching TV and family mealtime routines.

"The only factor of the four that we investigated that mediated the relationship between maternal employment status and child obesity was how much sleep the child was getting each night," said lead author Katherine E. Speirs.

Speirs and co-authors Janet M. Liechty and Chi-Fang Wu for one year followed 247 mother-child pairs from the STRONG Kids study. The children, who ranged from 3 to 5 years old, were weighed, measured and had their body mass index calculated at the outset of the study and again one year later. At the second weigh-in, 17 percent of the preschoolers were overweight and 12 percent were obese, according to BMI-for-age growth charts.

Sixty-six percent of the mothers in the sample were employed full time, defined as working 35 hours or more per week. Another 18 percent of the women were employed part time, or 20 to 34 hours per week. Children whose mothers worked full time got fewer hours of sleep than peers whose mothers worked less than 20 hours per week. The children of women who worked full time also tended to have higher BMIs at the second weigh-in.

Just 18 percent of the preschoolers in the sample were getting the 11 to 12 hours of nightly sleep recommended by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the researchers found. On average, the children were getting about 9.6 hours of nighttime sleep. Each additional hour of nighttime sleep that a child obtained was associated with a 6.8 percent decrease in their BMI at the second weigh-in, the researchers found.

"We looked at nighttime sleep in particular, because studies show that the amount of nighttime sleep matters for regulating weight," said Liechty, a professor of medicine and of social work. "We think that it might be the more hours that mothers are working, the less time they have, and there may be some sort of tradeoff going on, 'Do I spend quality time with my child or do we get to bed early?'" Speirs said. "And then in the morning, when mothers leave for work, their children also wake up early to get to day care."

### How much sleep is enough?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Recommended hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newborns</td>
<td>16-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool-aged children</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-aged children</td>
<td>At least 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults, including the elderly</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Mothers whose children were enrolled in 32 licensed day care centers in Central Illinois were recruited for the study. Sixty-six percent of the women had college degrees; about a third had household incomes under $40,000 a year, and just over half the sample had household incomes under $70,000 a year.

"The challenges of ensuring that children obtain adequate sleep may be even greater for low-income women, who often hold multiple jobs or work rotating shifts or nonstandard hours," Speirs said. "There are lots of characteristics about mothers' employment that are really important to help us better understand the relationship between mothers' employment status and child obesity, such as whether women are working part time voluntarily or involuntarily, or scheduled or nonscheduled hours," said Wu, a professor of social work.


Keywords: work and family; health; obesity.
Food Waste has Economic and Environmental Consequences

Researchers at the Waste and Resources Action Program (WRAP) in Britain estimate that, worldwide, one third of all food produced is never consumed and the cost of wasting all that food is $400 billion a year. If food waste were reduced by 20 to 50 percent, $120-$300 billion a year could be saved.

How much food does the U.S. waste? The amount and costs of food waste in the U.S. are staggering. We annually waste approximately 60 million metric tons of food which costs $162 billion. In addition, 32 million tons of food ends up in municipal landfills which costs local governments $1.5 billion a year.

Richard Swannel, director of WARP stated, “the difficulty is often in knowing where to start and how to make the biggest economic and environmental savings.”

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimated that the food retailers and consumers discard in the developed countries would feed more than the world’s 870 million hungry people.

There are also environmental issues associated with food waste. When it ends up in landfills, it decomposes and emits methane, a greenhouse gas. Globally, the amount of methane that is produced is 3.3 billion metric tons annually which is approximately 7 percent of total emissions.

In the U.S., this problem is being tackled by cities and the food industry. Some cities are providing grants to local businesses and nonprofits to help cover the cost of either recycling food products or turning them into compost. The food industry and supermarket chains have made expiration dates easier to understand, selling smaller portions of food, donating more food, and making changes to how foods are manufactured to reduce food waste.

Mr. Swannel commented that “awareness of food waste has risen, but we need to do more to tie that awareness to action on the ground. We need to find better ways to deal with food waste, but we need to prevent it in the first place.”

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has the following tips on how to reduce food waste:

- Shop your refrigerator first! Cook or eat what you already have at home before buying more.
- Plan your menu before you go shopping and buy only those things on your menu.
- Buy only what you realistically need and will use. Buying in bulk only saves money if you are able to use the food before it spoils.
- Be creative! If safe and healthy, use the edible parts of food that you normally do not eat. For example, stale bread can be used to make
croutons and beet tops can be sautéed for a delicious side dish.

- Nutritious, safe, and untouched food can be donated to food banks to help those in need.
- Freeze, preserve, or can surplus fruits and vegetables—especially abundant seasonal produce.
- At restaurants, order only what you can finish by asking about portion sizes and be aware of side dishes included with entrees. Take home the leftovers and keep them for your next meal.
- At all-you-can-eat buffets, take only what you can eat.
- Compost food scraps rather than throwing them away.


Keyword: food waste.

### Active Kids Learn Better

There is well documented evidence that being physically active has numerous health benefits. Now, information contained in a Research Brief, written by the Active Living Research group, shows that it can also improve academic performance in children. Some of the key findings show that physical activity has immediate and long term effects:

1. Almost immediately after being physically active, children are better able to concentrate on classroom tasks which can enhance learning.

   The immediate effects of being physically active on increasing the neural activity in the brain are shown below. Researchers at the University of Illinois took brain scans of children taking a test under two different conditions: (1) after sitting quietly for 20 minutes (on the left) and (2) after walking for 20 minutes (on the right). The color blue represents lower neural activity while the color red represents higher brain activity.

2. Overtime, being physically active improves children’s academic performance in mathematics, reading, and writing, and their standardized test scores by 6 percent over three years.

   The time of day when students are active also plays a role, with morning and midday having the greatest cognitive benefit. Schools should consider bringing back physical education as a way to help students get the most out of their education.


Keywords: kids, physical activity.
The Greatest Wealth is Health: Relationships between Health and Financial Behaviors

Many people endanger their health as they work harder and harder to accumulate wealth. Unfortunately, “Poor health carries a huge opportunity cost… you can’t save if you can’t earn, and you can’t earn without your health.”

Dr. Barbara O’Neill, Extension Specialist in Financial Resource Management at Rutgers University, learned through a personal health crisis that “Poor health affects individuals and families by draining funds that could otherwise be used for wealth accumulation and financial goal attainment.” She documents many other health and wealth associations including: “…weight bias resulting in lower incomes for women, better health habits during recessions, high medical expenses for the treatment of chronic diseases, and higher lifetime health care costs for healthy individuals with higher than average life expectancies.” Yes if you are healthy, you are likely to live longer and need more financial assets to last throughout your entire lifetime.

It is recommended that educators, counselors, and advisers work holistically and consider health factors as well as financial strengths and challenges when working with people. Discussions of health issues and health care spending in financial education programs, in counseling sessions, and in financial planning can give clients more insights into their unique financial situation due to health factors and can increase the effectiveness of financial plans. It is important to note that professionals need to be non-judgmental when working with smokers, the obese, or those having other unhealthy lifestyles.

O’Neill also discusses two personality traits that potentially affect health and finance behaviors: conscientiousness and time preference. “These personality traits affect patterns of thinking and behaving and are relatively stable over time and across various life situations.”

To help people reach their personal health and financial planning goals, Rutgers Cooperative Extension developed a new online self-assessment tool called the Personal Health and Finance Quiz. Because health and personal finance behavior changes start with daily action steps, the Quiz simultaneously documents users’ daily health and personal finance practices.

The Quiz is part of Small Steps to Health and Wealth™ (SSHV) a national Cooperative Extension program developed to motivate Americans to take action to simultaneously improve their health and personal finances. The Quiz is designed to provide feedback to individual users, to collect research data about the daily health and financial practices of Americans, and to evaluate the impact of SSHW learning activities to inform future Extension programs.

Data gathered from the Quiz will be used to test relationships between health and financial practices. Take the Quiz yourself and share the link with program participants. The link is: http://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/health-finance-quiz.


Keywords: wealth, health, finances.
Credit: Bad News or Good News?

A recent survey by CardHub revealed that credit card debt ballooned in 2014, leaving American households with a net increase of $57.1 billion in new credit card debt. The credit card comparison site forecasts that new credit card debt will rise 5 percent in 2015, reaching $60 billion.

Is the increased spending bad news or good news? It is bad news for consumers whose wage growth cannot support it or allow them to repay the debt. According to CardHub, “The surge has left the average household credit card balance at almost $7,200, or not far from the $8,300 level that CardHub considers unsustainable.”

It is bad news considering Pew Charitable Trust research which reported that more than half of Americans say they’re financially insecure, due to student loans, credit card debt, and lack of income. “With more than half saying they aren’t prepared for a financial emergency, American’s rising credit card debt could pose a problem if interest rates rise or the economy falters.”

However, there is good news. Because of an improving job market, Americans are handling their debt levels. “The credit card charge-off rate, or the percentage of debt that’s declared unrecoverable by credit card companies, is about 2.89 percent, the lowest since 1985, CardHub said.” It is also good news if the increased credit card debt reflects that Americans are feeling more positive about the economy.


Keywords: credit cards, debt, economy.

Do You Worry about Money?

A recent Legg Mason study found that the average investor thinks or worries about money for one hour and twenty minutes per day. This daily time adds up to 9 hours a week and 475 hours over a year. Those figures are just the average. “According to Legg Mason’s survey, 10 percent of all investors spend two to three hours each day—or between 730 and 1,095 hours annually—thinking or worrying about money.”

The online survey respondents were among 458 affluent investors with a minimum of $200,000 in investable assets, excluding their home. The average respondent age was 58 and their top concerns were listed as: managing catastrophe, longevity, and inflation.

While respondents to this survey most likely do not represent the typical participant in University of Idaho Extension financial education programs, it does present an opportunity for county educators. If investors with these amounts of investable assets are worrying this much about money, the average Idahoan is also spending many hours thinking and worrying about money. The difficult part is to market programs appropriately to attract consumers to attend.


Keywords: finances, worry, stress.