



How to Be Financially Happy ***9.5 Ideas You Can Implement NOW!***

I am an old television fan. I love the old classics from the 60's and 70's: I Love Lucy, Happy Days, The Dick Van Dyke Show and my all-time favorite, The Andy Griffith Show. Ever notice how "happy" everyone was in these shows? Most of them didn't have much money, but they were happy with life in general. There was one show; however, that told about an American family that had a lot of money. It wasn't their source of happiness, though. In fact, they'd have been happy without their fortune. I'm referring of course to the Clampett family, also known as The Beverly Hillbillies. The most contented people on the show were the ones who didn't spend too much or hoard what they had. There's a lesson to be learned from being content with what you have. But how can you be financially happy? What are steps you can take to make your bottom-line more secure? Here are 10 ideas to get the new year off on the right foot. A word of reference: This is NOT a plan to make more money. It is ten steps to help you be happy with what you have and how to KEEP more of it. So let's get going...

1. Pay as you go. Pay your bills when they come in. Most people put off paying their bills either until they are due or over a period of time. This misleads them in to thinking they have more money. G. Randolph said, "Pay as you go is the philosopher's stone." Pay as you go and you will have a realistic viewpoint as to what you have in your bank account. Anticipate the bills coming in by keeping the money in your checking account to cover them, then pay them the day they arrive. Trust me, you'll know what you have and be happier about it. Roy Goodman said, "Remember that happiness is a way of travel, not a destination."

2. Minimize credit card debt. According to the Credit Counseling Center in Dallas, Texas, the average American household is \$12,000 in credit card debt! That figure is double what it was ten years ago. I like this quote from Dr. Joyce Brothers, "Credit buying is much like being drunk. The buzz happens immediately, and it gives you a lift. The hangover comes the day after." I listen to media financial advisers like Clark Howard and Dave Ramsey and Suze Orman. Most people who call in to their nationally syndicated radio and television shows are in credit card debt up past their eyeballs. People will call in who are \$20,000 in debt from credit cards. Don't fool yourself into thinking you'll have more money

later. Pay as you go, just like I said with your bills. A little tip: I saw a news report last month that said you can call some credit card companies and request a lower finance rate on your card. You won't know until you try.

3. Save 5% of your income. Most people have no savings plan and if their company wasn't putting money into their retirement wouldn't have any money there either. We like to spend money the moment we get it and spend it when we don't even have it. Start putting just 5% into a savings account and leave it alone! The younger you are the more you will have exponentially in later years. It's like the old adage of the ant and the grasshopper. The ant saved for the winter while the grasshopper played and spent all he had. When winter came, the ant was ready. If we have another recession or an emergency arises in your life (your own personal winter), how ready will you be?

4. Communicate with your spouse and family about finances. I always thought the line in "Raising Arizona" where the two escaped convicts come to the Hi and Ed's home and find them squabbling is telling. John Goodman, one of the escaped cons says, "This is about finances, isn't it, Hi?" Well it's about more than that in the movie, but John raises the point that most family disagreements are over finances and poor communication. Learn to communicate positively about spending, budgets and cash flow in your home. Who is spending what, where and when? Who is responsible for balancing the check book? Are you keeping to the family/household budget? Ask now or you will regret later.

5. Work toward your goals. Do you have personal goals? Did you know that less than 33% of people today even have goals? And most of them haven't written them down anywhere. Odds are you are one of them. Learn to set goals for yourself, your family and your organization. Then work toward them. Find small ways to reward yourself at each step toward your given goal. Just by writing down and reviewing them once a month you will be ahead of most of the population. Write them down everywhere.- in your calendar, your day timer, your brief case, the wall of your office, in your car and even (if you have one) on your cell phone memo text pad. Surveys have show that we need reminding about goals about once every 26-30 days.

6. Spend responsibly. Don't be consumed with a desire for more and learn to live within your means. Vernon Howard said, "You have succeeded in life when all you really want is only what you really need." I look for bargains everywhere I go, too. I get them because most people assume that the list price is non-negotiable. Almost everything is negotiable--we just fail to negotiate. We negotiate for cars and houses. I negotiate for cell phone service, insurance coverage, home theater equipment and many other items. I save money and always leave the purchase agreement with a win-win situation. Why would you want to buy something if you knew you could get it for 10%-50% cheaper by shopping around or by discussing the price a little? Don't buy anything you know

you don't have to have. Don't buy when the price is low but you don't have the money to cover the purchase. It'll be low again, and sooner than you think.

7. Keep up with your cash. Save receipts. Know where your money is and how much you have. Don't fear your cash, respect it. We work hard to get money then we act spend like it took nothing to obtain it. Don't overfill your wallet. Put in just enough to get by on and live on that. Oliver Goldsmith was quoted, "If frugality were established in the state, and if our expenses were laid out to meet needs rather than superfluities of life, there might be fewer wants, and even fewer pleasures, but infinitely more happiness." Stop going to the ATM machine or getting extra cash back at the store. Live on a weekly budget, and when it runs out, you're out. Now I know you're saying that emergencies will come up (see the step on saving 5%) or that you can't live once the money runs out. You will be surprised how little you'll spend on useless things when you have to live on a little.

8. Get organized. Start a file system for bills, receipts, coupons, savings accounts, and investments. People in heavy debt usually can't tell you where the money is or went. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Often you can get it free or for a one-time fee. Accountants would rather see you organized than have you bring in a pile of papers and dump them on their desk. Our accountant told us one time that if we had not gotten a return on our taxes we would have spent the excess money and not known where it had gone. He was probably right. Here's a question for you: Do you know where every penny went from your tax rebate this past year? Most people will answer "No." If you know, you are ahead of them already.

9. Give it away. That's right give money away. The wealthiest people usually are the best (not biggest, mind you) givers. Why? They've learned that you get by giving. You get satisfaction, you get fulfillment, you get tax breaks and you get the peace that you are helping others. Give to the United Way, the Red Cross, the church, AmeriCares or some other charity that helps others and you believe in. I heard a tape a month ago that said: "Imagine you are God and you want to bless someone. Would you give prosperity to someone who hoards everything and doesn't share or would you give it to the person who shares and makes the world a better place?" Maybe you don't have much because you don't give much. John Fountain said, "Happy were men if they but understood There is no safety but in doing good."

9.5. START NOW! Just do it. Don't put these steps off until a more opportune time. There won't ever be one. Decide today, right now, that you will implement all of these ideas. Decide to keep more of your money by keeping track of it, by not spending it foolishly, by not accumulating more debt than what you have and by giving some of it away. Nothing you've read here is new. I didn't originate any of the 10 steps. This is advice that you can get anywhere: Fortune or Money magazines, Clark Howard, Dave Ramsey or Suze Orman, but most people won't take the time to act on it. Here's a shocker, 98% of the people reading this will

not act on it in the next 24 hours. You can beat them all by starting now. What are you waiting for?

A final quote to help you appreciate and keep your finances: Frederick Koenig said, "We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have."

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