PERSPECTIVES

FALL 2017 EDITION

STRESSED OUT?

Money Is the Number One Stressor In Americans' Lives

ARE YOU 50 AND STRUGGLING TO FINANCE THE RETIREMENT YOU WANT?

EATING FRESH

When It Comes to Food, the Fresher the Better

Winterizing *Your Home*

INSIGHT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Make the most of what you have.
Invest with insight.

FALL WELCOME

Dear Client,

Summer has passed by all-too-quickly! We hope you've been enjoying time with family and friends and are ready for fall.

We're looking forward to enjoying cooler nights with open windows, watching football games and sipping cider and pumpkin spice lattes. These are just a few of our fall favorites that embody this cozy, comfortable time of year.

In a departure from our traditional newsletter content, we hope you'll indulge us in a bit of fun as you ponder the question on the back cover and send us your answers. For those who participate, you'll have a chance to win one of two, $50 restaurant gift cards!

In our fall newsletter, we share ways to provide you or someone you know with more comfort, to reduce stress, and to put life back on a healthier financial and physical track.

The topic of money can be one of the most stressful issues Americans cope with today. In this issue, learn ways to reduce stress with better money management and saving techniques.

For people in their 50s who are struggling to finance your desired retirement, follow our tips for how to get on track.

Eating the freshest, most nutrient-rich foods available during this season is easier than ever when you choose local options. Eating healthy meals, along with winterizing your home, boosts your mental state and physical life and makes life much cozier.

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to serve you. On behalf of all of us at Insight Financial Services, thank you and best wishes for this fall season.

Warm Regards,

Pete Martinez M.B.A.
Insight Financial Services

Festive Fall Recipe

Serves 8

Ingredients:

- 8 whole apples, more if using small apples
- 4 11-oz packages of caramel melts
- 2 TBSP heavy cream
- 1 tsp vanilla
- Dash of salt
- *Toppings:* mini chocolate candies (like M&Ms), crushed pretzels, kosher salt, chocolate chips, coconut, crushed pecans, crushed salted cracker (like Saltines)
- Chopsticks

Directions:

1. Melt cream and caramels together in a double boiler *(or glass bowl set on top of a simmering saucepot of water)*.
2. Add salt and vanilla to melted caramel mixture, stirring until smooth.
3. Turn apples upside down, and insert a chopstick into the bottom of each apple.
4. Dip each apple into the melted caramel mixture, completely covering the apple up to the chopstick's base.
5. Let excess caramel drip off of apple before rolling the caramel apple into whatever toppings you want to use *(make sure you do this step carefully and quickly, before the caramel cools).*
6. Repeat process for each apple, placing coated apples on wax paper.
7. Cool apples in refrigerator, and cover them in plastic wrap or cellophane.

Recipe adapted from The Pioneer Woman[1]

1 http://thepioneerwoman.com/cooking/salted-and-other-caramel-apples/

Thought for the Day

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

– Audrey Hepburn

STRESSED OUT?

MONEY IS THE NUMBER ONE STRESSOR IN AMERICANS' LIVES.

There's no doubt Americans are living in a supercharged, super stressful world right now. Even if the stresses of the world are not necessarily weighing you down, you might have a friend or loved one who is struggling right now. This information and these tips for coping might benefit them.

A survey by the American Psychological Association conducted between August 2016 and January 2017 shows that, for the first time in 10 years, Americans' overall stress levels have increased. The "Stress in America" survey typically finds that stress is caused by three main factors—money, work, and the economy. Today, younger Americans are worried about college debt, and older Americans are concerned about retirement. It appears everyone is anxious about the economic prospects of the next generation.[1]

In a recent Gallup poll, it was apparent that, despite some signs of gains in the economy, average Americans aren't feeling them. It showed that Americans continue to be most worried about having enough money to retire; 64% were moderately to very worried about this. Not far behind that, Americans were also concerned about their ability to pay for the following:

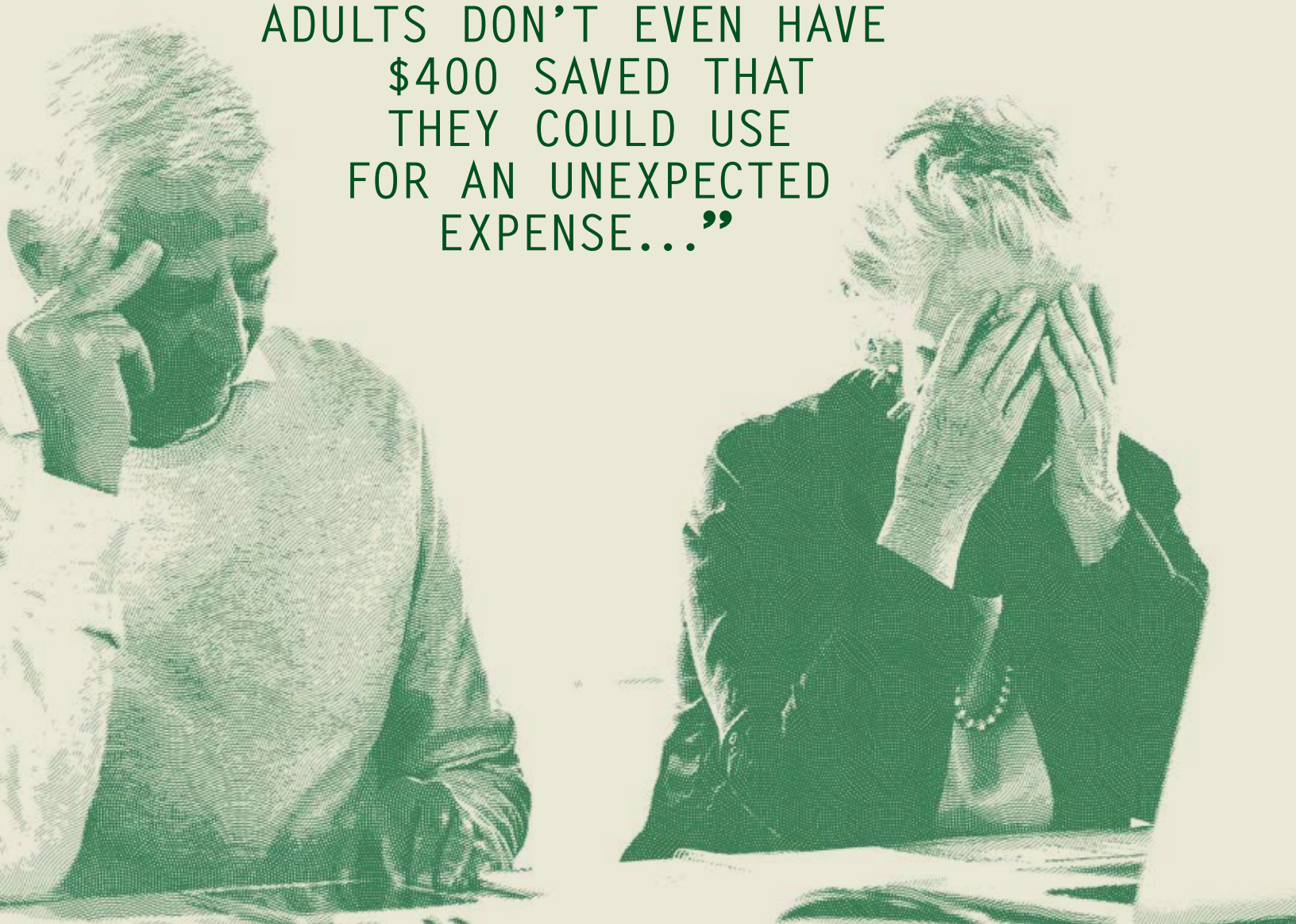
- Medical costs of a serious illness or accident
- The standard of living they enjoy
- Normal monthly bills
- Medical costs for typical health care
- Rent, mortgage, or other housing costs
- Minimum payments on their credit cards
- College tuition for their children[2]

Yet another poll—this one by GoBankingRates—showed that Americans are very worried about their ability to pay off debt, including credit cards. The second-most-common response was not having enough money for an emergency. When you consider that Americans have a collective credit card balance of $729 billion, it is little wonder they are concerned about getting out of debt. Financial representatives typically recommend having three to six months' worth of expenses saved for emergencies, such as losing a job or paying a medical bill. However, about half of US adults don't even have $400 saved that they could use for an unexpected expense, according to the Federal Reserve. Although experts suggest paying down high-interest debt as a priority, consumers must balance paying off their debts with collecting their emergency funds.[3]

This kind of stress can lead to serious problems with physical and mental health. In a new study by Payoff, researchers discovered that 23% of respondents were experiencing symptoms often associated with posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, related to their financial situations. For millennials, it was 36%.[4] Symptoms of PTSD include reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, feeling bad about yourself or others, and feeling keyed up. Other symptoms can include the inability to control emotions or impulsive behavior.[5]

Among other stressors, survey respondents worried about becoming homeless or being frequently late paying bills. Some denied the severity of their debt or the reality of paying it off. The study also showed that people's behaviors were irrational and motivated by denial and avoidance, which left them even less able to plan or manage their finances. Payoff researchers attribute some of the respondents' troubles to stagnant incomes, no savings, high levels of debt, and financial ordeals, such as foreclosures, catastrophic illnesses, and high medical debt.[6]

"ABOUT HALF OF US ADULTS DON'T EVEN HAVE $400 SAVED THAT THEY COULD USE FOR AN UNEXPECTED EXPENSE..."



While some stress can be good for us and motivate us, prolonged stress can affect us physically, and it can even lead to depression, anxiety, obesity, and heart conditions.[7] To help, learn skills to better manage your stress:[8]

STRESS INOCULATION

This involves educating yourself about stress by talking with people who have been through it and rehearsing or preparing yourself for stress by pushing yourself to your limits. For example, you could run a challenging race and then implement what you learned from dealing with that when a stressful event hits you.

BUILD RESILIENCE

Find social support, find a role model, face your fears, adopt a positive attitude, find meaning and purpose, and reframe the situation.

EXERCISE

It will not eliminate your stress, but it gives your body the physical conditioning it needs to recover from stress.

REST YOUR MIND

Give your brain a chance to meditate, to shut down, and to stop thinking about the stresses in your life.

CONTROL YOUR BREATHING

Learning to control your breathing has been shown to reduce stress, increase alertness, and boost your immune system.

WRITE IN A JOURNAL

Writing down your thoughts, perspectives, feelings, and experiences can help you process the things you are thinking about or stressing over.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America recommends learning what your stress triggers are. Are they work, finances, family, school, or relationships? The organization also suggests limiting alcohol and caffeine, both of which can trigger anxiety and panic attacks; eating well-balanced meals and energy-boosting snacks; getting a full eight hours of sleep; and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.[9]

Although the world will continue to move fast and bring a variety of pressures and worries, we can learn ways to react differently in order to keep our bodies and minds balanced and healthy.

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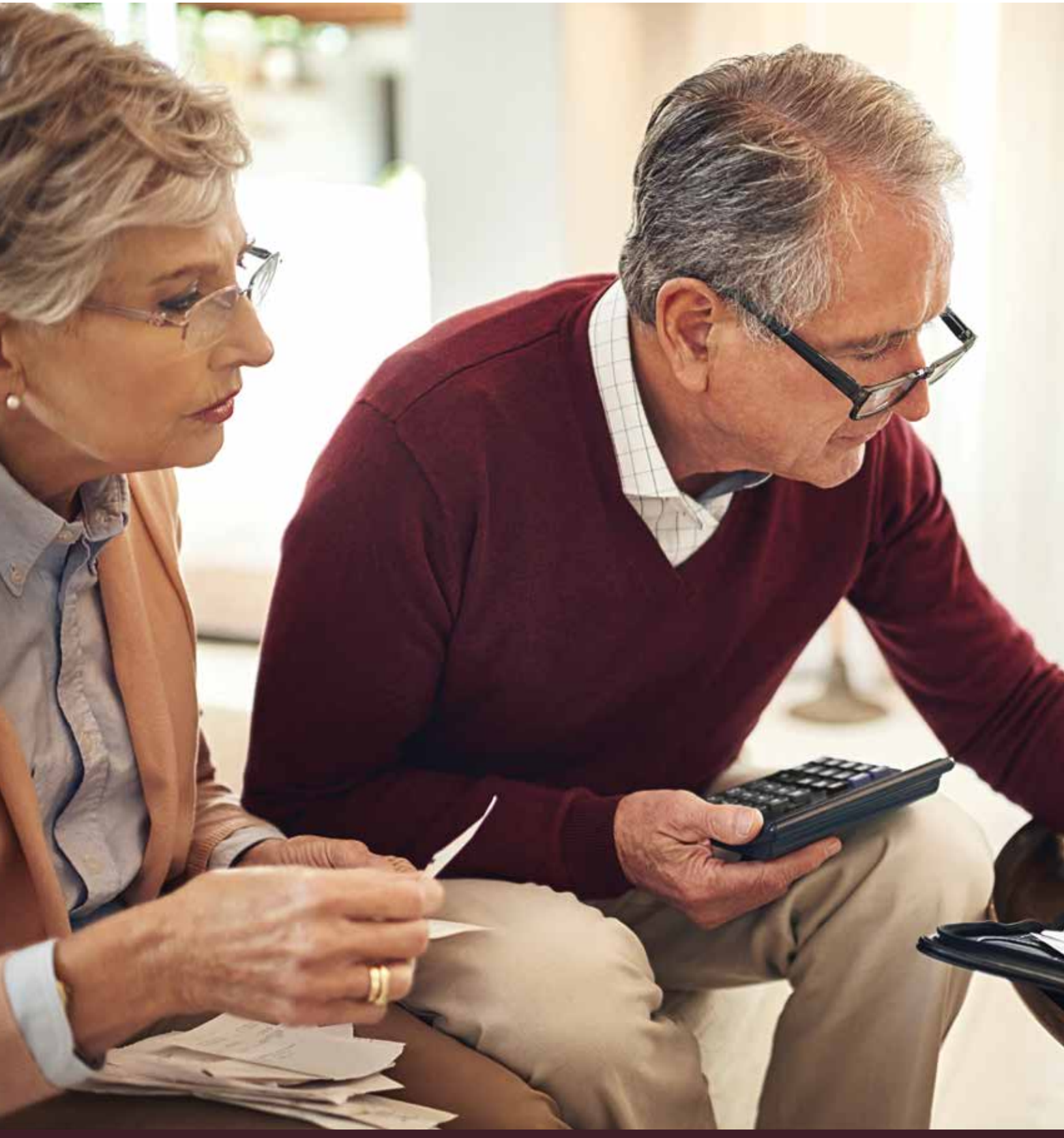


Are You 50 AND STRUGGLING TO FINANCE THE *Retirement You Want?*

Check out these eight tips to improve your situation.

More than one-third of Americans have little to no money saved for retirement. Most of them are part of generation X, who were most affected by the Great Recession of 2008. They lost almost half of their net wealth during a time when they carried hefty financial obligations including mortgages, aging parents, and children - some of whom were entering adulthood. On the other hand there are two-thirds of Americans that have saved for retirement, but have they saved enough to retire the way they want to? Can they take all the trips they have been dreaming of, or spend as much time with the grandkids as they wish?

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NUMBERS REVEALS THIS: [1]

23% OF AMERICANS HAVE LESS THAN $10,000 SAVED FOR RETIREMENT.

52% OF GEN XERS HAVE LESS THAN $10,000 SAVED.

ONLY **13%** OF AMERICANS HAVE $300,000 OR MORE SAVED FOR RETIREMENT.

If you are 50 or already into your 50s and you have not saved enough for your retirement, there is no need to panic. There are steps you can take to improve your situation. But you must start right now.

1. SAVE MORE. This is probably the most obvious step to take. Because your 50s are typically your peak earning years, the IRS lets you save more money in your retirement plans starting the year you turn 50. Talk with your financial representative to learn more about your specific situation.[2]

2. PROTECT YOUR INCOME. Guarding your earning potential is imperative in your 50s. An accident or unexpected, serious illness or diagnosis could pull you off your savings path. Who can afford expensive medical bills and lost wages? Be sure to review any disability insurance you might have through your employer or an individual plan. Understand your policy well enough to know whether you have the best coverage for your situation. Learn the details. For example, how long does it take for your benefit to start when you are sick? The longer the elimination period, the more out-of-pocket expenses you might have before your benefits are available.[3]

3. GENERATE MORE INCOME. Look for ways to create additional income that you can use to increase savings now and augment your retirement later. You might consider writing a book or a blog, teaching at a local college, or leveraging your expertise in other ways. Do you have a business idea you can act on? [4]

4. CONSIDER DOWNSIZING. Even if the value of your home has not returned to its former value, think about moving into a smaller home. It could save you thousands of dollars a year in taxes, utility costs, maintenance and repairs, and insurance. That could be money you redirect into retirement savings.[5]

5. USE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU SAVE AND TRACK YOUR SPENDING. Research savings, micro-investing, and tracking apps that allow you to keep close track of your money. Savings apps connect to your credit card, round up totals, and put the difference into a savings account. Micro-investing apps allow you to invest small increments of money, even as little as $5. Other apps let you track your spending habits and determine where your money goes so you can cut wasteful spending.[6]

6. WEIGH YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY OPTIONS. Although you are eligible to file for Social Security benefits when you turn 62, if you do it then, your monthly check will be reduced for the rest of your life. If you have the ability to work a few more years or you have other sources of income, consider delaying your Social Security checks—at least until you turn 66. This could increase your monthly benefits by 30%.

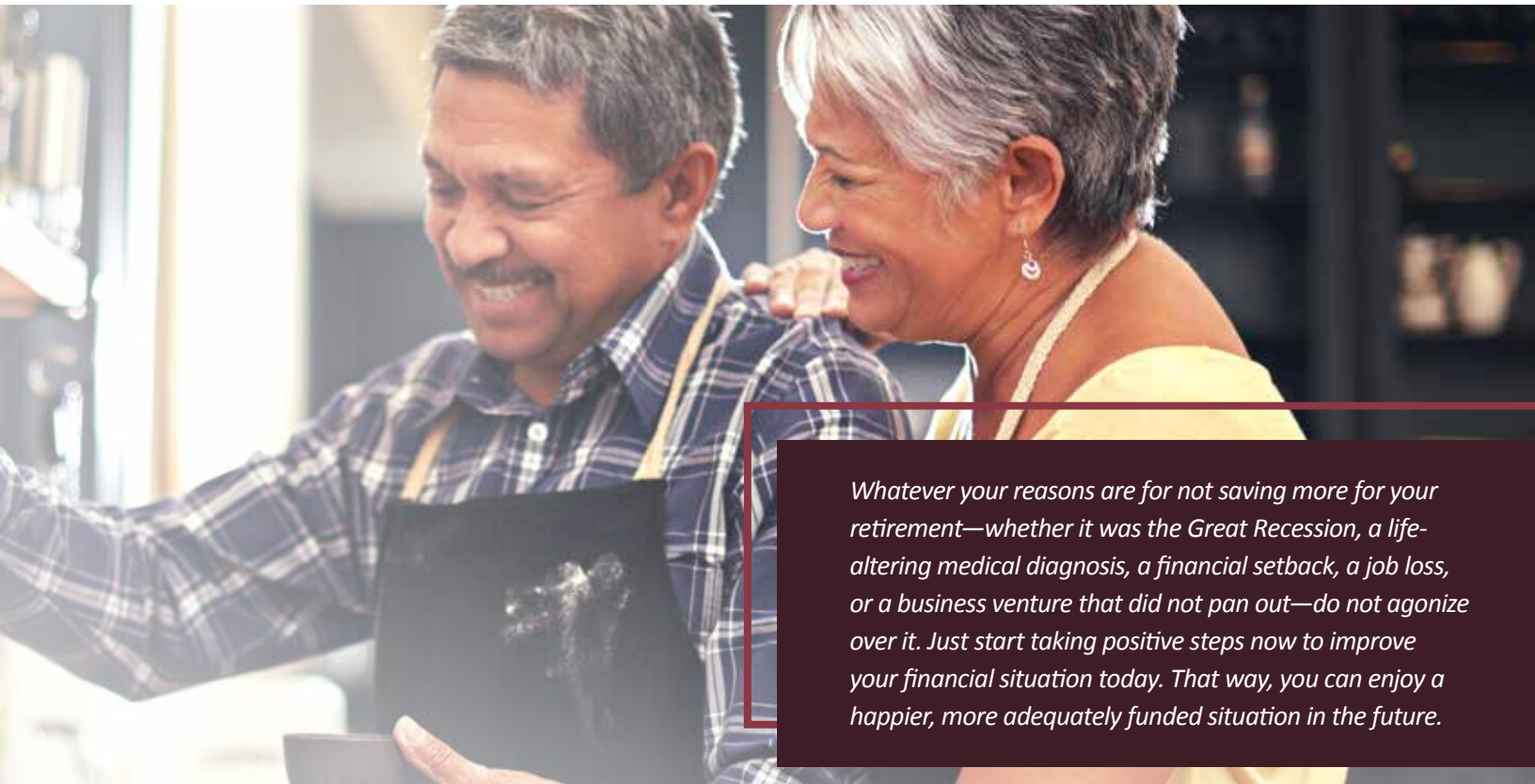
Early in 2017, the Social Security Administration launched an online tool that lets you review your earnings record and estimate your benefits. Check this annually to ensure accuracy; unreported and underreported income could reduce your monthly payments. Visit www.ssa.gov/myaccount for that information.[7]

7. KEEP WORKING IF YOU CAN. Working longer can boost your retirement possibilities. You might save more, and that savings will have time to potentially grow and enhance the size of your retirement nest egg. Additionally, the longer you are able to work, the fewer years your nest egg has to fund your retirement. [8]

8. REEXAMINE HOW MUCH YOU WILL NEED IN RETIREMENT. Based on your situation, create a hypothetical budget to see what is realistic. Then, while you are still working, live on that hypothetical budget—on your projected income. This will force you to trim your spending and, in turn, allow you to save more.

Whatever your reasons are for not saving more for the retirement lifestyle you want—whether it was the Great Recession, a life-altering medical diagnosis, a financial setback, a job loss, or a business venture that did not pan out—do not agonize over it. Just start taking positive steps today to begin improving your financial situation now. That way you can aim for a happier, more adequately funded retirement in the future.[9]

Investing involves risks including possible loss of principal.



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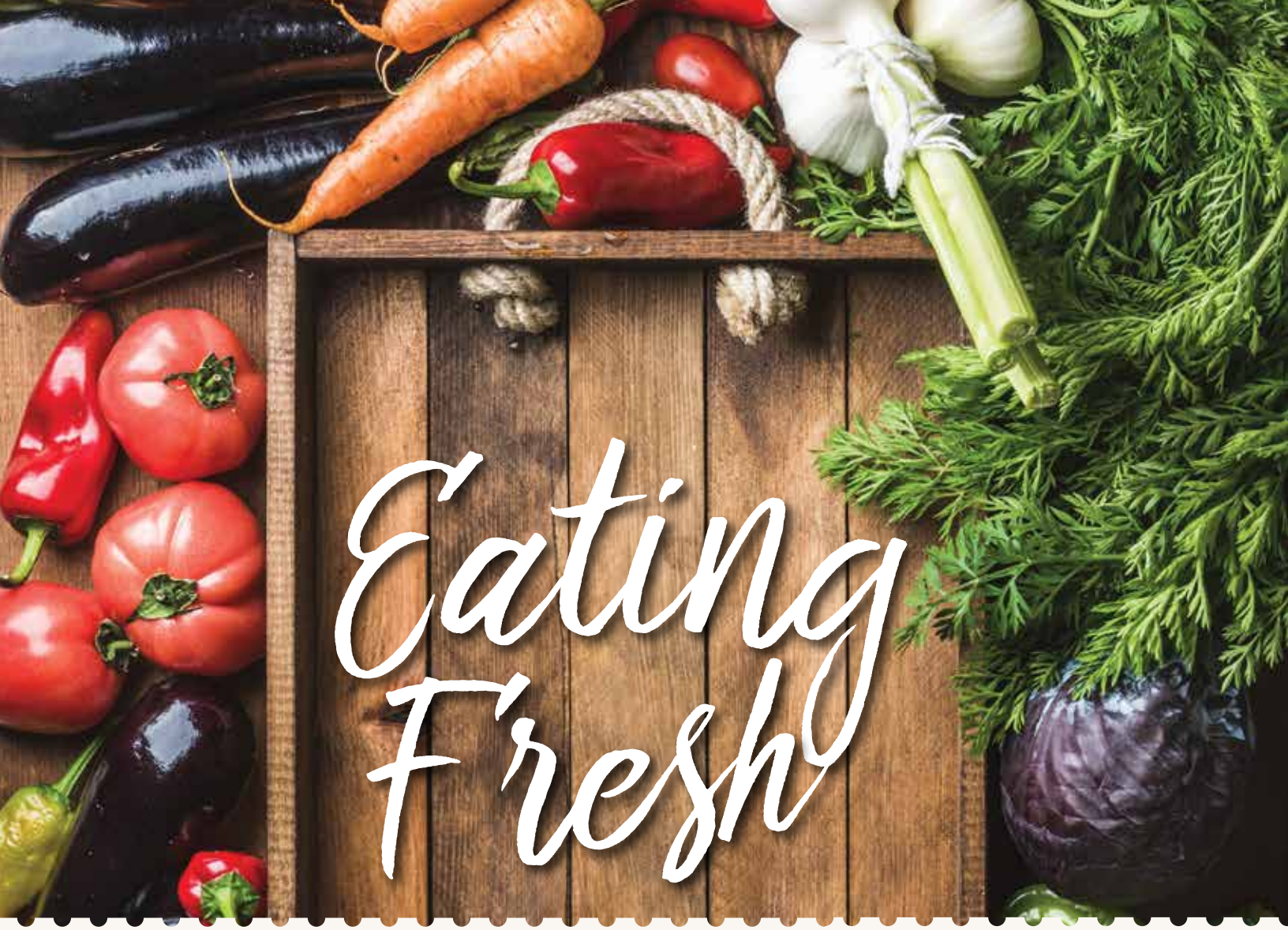

Eating Fresh

WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD, THE FRESHER THE BETTER.

American statistics on food, nutrition, and weight are alarming. Projections indicate that by 2030, half of all adults—115 million—in the United States will be obese, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Overweight teenagers have a 70% chance of being overweight or obese adults. It is estimated that obesity-related illness, including chronic disease, disability, and death, carry a cost of $190 billion annually.

Current science shows that adopting healthy eating patterns and getting regular physical activity not only can help people reach and sustain good health but can also reduce the risk of chronic disease throughout people's lives. Healthy eating patterns can be adapted for a person's preferences in taste, traditions, and culture.[1]

HEALTHY EATING PATTERNS

If you wonder what it means to develop healthy eating patterns, the HHS's President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition's guidelines recommend eating these every day:

- A variety of vegetables
- Whole fruits
- Whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy
- A variety of proteins
- Oils, including those from plants and those naturally present in nuts, seeds, seafood, and olives

Other tips to remember include the following: [2]

AVOID

- Processed foods that come in boxes, cans, or packets because of their excessive sodium, sugar, preservatives, and additives.
- Long, complicated ingredients labels. The shorter and easier to understand, the better.

LIMIT OR ELIMINATE

- Sodium, added sugars, saturated fats, and sweetened drinks.[3]

DO EAT

- Five or six meals a day to keep your blood-sugar levels even and your energy levels high.[4]
- Fresh foods and other ingredients grown locally.

Sticking with local foods results in consuming the tastiest, nutrient-rich produce of the season.

How do you find fresh, locally grown foods and ingredients? You can find them at nearby farmers' markets, consumer-owned cooperative grocery stores, and some chain grocery stores in your area. Eating fresh, locally grown foods is easier than ever today. Buying and eating food that comes from your immediate or surrounding area is not only healthy for you, but it's good for your local economy, environment, and social health.[5]

Here are two more great reasons to buy local foods. [6]

Fruits and vegetables start losing nutrients as soon as they are picked. Foods that come from local or nearby sources are fresher. They have not spent days traveling across the country to get to you. Look carefully at labels to see from where the food originated. The farther away your fruits and vegetables traveled, the less fresh they are.

Sticking with local foods results in consuming the tastiest, nutrient-rich produce of the season. In the spring, focus on leafy vegetables. The greening that occurs in springtime should be represented by greens on your plate, including kale, spinach, romaine lettuce, fresh parsley, and basil. In the summer, stick with light, cooling foods, such as strawberries, apples, pears, and plums and vegetables like summer squash, broccoli, and cauliflower. In the fall, turn toward autumn harvest foods, including carrots, sweet potatoes, onions, and garlic. Emphasize warming spices like ginger, peppercorns, and mustard seeds. In the winter, turn even more toward warming foods, such as root vegetables, including carrots, potatoes, squash, onions, and garlic.[7]

KEEPING CALORIES IN CHECK

When eating at restaurants or through a meal-ordering service, make sure the establishment promotes itself as "farm-to-table" or publicizes that it uses locally sourced food. Other guidelines to keep your calories in check include the following:

- Avoid ordering appetizers and other before-the-meal extras.
- Ask for butter, salad dressings, and sauces to be served on the side.
- Choose broiled, baked, or grilled proteins.
- Stay away from high-sodium foods.
- Be selective at salad bars. Avoid cheeses, premade pasta, or bean salads.
- Choose desserts like fresh fruit, fruit ice, sherbet, gelatin, or angel food cake.
- Control portion size by asking for a lunch-size helping, sharing with your companion, or asking for a to-go box before your meal is served so you can put away half of it for later.
- Opt for a small salad, fruit, or vegetables as a side.

Local, fresh foods support your good health, but they also serve your community in a variety of ways. Locally sourced food leaves a smaller carbon footprint than foods that have been shipped thousands of miles. Homegrown food preserves green space and farmland in your community. Less distance between your food source and your kitchen table also reduces the chance of contamination. It supports your local economy. (Money spent locally stays local.) And since the food travels through fewer hands, more of the money you spend ends up back in the pockets of those who raised and grew your food. Finally, buying at farmers' markets creates community. It becomes a place where the locals gather to chat and socialize.

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Winterizing Your HOME

No matter where you live, there are ways to winterize your home and prepare for the colder temperatures that winter brings. For some, those cold and freezing temperatures will be persistent. For others, they will come and go and likely be mixed with warm spells that spike to 80 degrees. Even in areas where the cold is mild and short lived, the efforts to keep cold air out will help keep cold air in when the temperatures rise outside.[1]

Here a variety of ways you can get ready for cold snaps, freezes, snowstorms, and winter in general. Pick and choose from these suggestions, selecting the ones that best fit your climate, house, and situation.

Check the Furnace

Replace or clean furnace filters once a month during the heating season. Dirty filters restrict airflow and increase energy demand. You could also switch to a permanent filter to reduce waste and hassle. If you need to replace your furnace, it will cost more, but a modern machine will be more efficient and save you money every month it is used. Keep your furnace clean, lubricated, and properly adjusted to save 5% to 15% off heating costs.[2]

Run Ceiling Fans in Reverse

Many ceiling units come with a switch (usually on the motor housing) that reverses the direction of the blades. Counterclockwise rotation produces cooling breezes; switching to clockwise makes it warmer. Air pooled near the ceiling is circulated back into the living space, which can cut your heating costs as much as 10%![3]

Winterize Your AC and Waterlines

Drain any hoses and air conditioner pipes, and make sure you don't have excess water pooled in equipment. If your AC has a water-shutoff valve, turn that off. Similarly, make sure hoses are drained and stowed away neatly. Turn off exterior water spigots. Seal water leaks around your house, and don't forget to remove window AC units and store them so you don't invite cold drafts all winter.[4]

Turn Down Your Water Heater

While many conventional water heaters are set to 140 degrees Fahrenheit by installers, most households don't need that much steam, and they end up paying for it—in dollars and the occasional scalding burn. Lowering the temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit (or lower) could reduce your water heating costs by 6% to 10%.[5]

Evaluate Doors and Windows and Stop Air Leaks

Most people could save about 20% on their energy costs by sealing up air leaks, according to the Energy Star program.[6] Start simple, and adopt that old Great Depression fixture, the draft snake, which you can easily make yourself. Just place a rolled bath towel under a drafty door. You can also use scraps of fabric sewn in a tube shape and filled with sand or kitty litter for heft. It pays to seal up gaps with caulking and weather stripping. Pay close attention to places where different building materials meet, such as in corners, around chimneys, where pipes or wires exit, and along the foundation. Light a stick of incense and move it along walls. (Avoid flammable materials.) Wherever the smoke flutters, you have air sneaking in—and heating or cooling slipping out.

Most people could save about 20% on their energy costs by sealing up air leaks, according to the Energy Star program.

Pick up a window insulation kit at your local hardware or discount store. Properly installed window plastic is essentially invisible, and it adds a buffer against drafts. Still air space can give a nice boost to your home's ability to hold heat. Want to go the extra mile? Installing a storm door can increase energy efficiency by 45%. It does this by sealing drafts and reducing air flow. Storm doors also offer greater flexibility for letting light and ventilation enter your home. Similarly, storm windows can make a big difference when cold winds are blowing and when the summer heat is radiating.[7]

Boost Insulation

Insulation is one of the best ways to save energy and money at home. It can make a significant difference to add more insulation between walls, and also make sure your attic floor and basement ceiling are well covered. The average home requires 12 to 15 inches of insulation in the attic, according to the Department of Energy.[8]

Insulate Pipes and Hot Water Heater

Insulating pipes and hot water heaters not only saves you on hot water but also decreases the chances of your pipes freezing. If your pipes are warm to the touch, they would do well with insulation. Preslit pipe foam is available at most hardware and home stores. Just cut it to size, and use duct tape to keep it in place. Insulating your hot water heater will take a little more effort but is still a DIY project for many. According to Energy.gov, it could save you 7% to 16% annually.[9]

Seal Ducts

Studies show that 10% to 30% of heated or cooled air in an average system escapes from ducts. It might pay to hire a professional to test your duct system and fix any problems. Properly sealed ducts also offer better protection against mold and dust.[10]

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Where would this path take you?

Your Name: _____ Daytime Phone #: (_____)_____

Send your written response to Kim Reiter at either Kreiter@ifsadvisors.com or by fax to (913) 402-2021, Attention Kim, by October 27th, 2017. We'll conduct a random drawing among all responses received and give away two, $50.00 restaurant gift cards. Winners will be notified by telephone. We'll publish the answers to the question via e-Mail.