

A Heritage Thanksgiving

10 Essential Criteria For
Choosing Your Target Market

Tips on How to Save
Money this Winter

Fall Table Décor

A glass of red wine, keeps the fat away?

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Health:

“But isn't their a way to drink, eat and be merry?”

Because you don't just read the headlines you live them.

Communication Prescription:

“The trend for coaching and mentoring has grown dramatically throughout the world and today, many companies automatically assigning a mentor or coach to new employees. “

Business Block:

“Why choose a target market?, You need to decide exactly who your audience is before you sell your services. “

Mind, Body and Spirit:

“It's time we woman decide to start treating ourselves as the goddess we were born to be. “

In The Kitchen:

“Images of big, beautiful turkeys with colorful plumage and tail feathers are everywhere during the Thanksgiving holiday season. “

The Mind of a Child:

“The kids by ages 6-9 had moved well on past babyish songs and folk songs I had taught them and were defining themselves by gravitating to the newer rock and rap styles. “

Editors Two Cents

Life has it's ups and downs. I have spent a lot of this month contemplating my life as a women, a mother, a daughter, a wife and a friend. There have been so many different moments in my life when I just was sure what could possibly happen next and sometimes if I'd actually make it through next day without exploding either with excitement or with frustration. As women of this century there are just so many expectations put upon us to be everything and perfect at it all.

We are expected to:

- ◆ hold down a good paying fulltime job to pull our weigh in helping cover the household costs
- ◆ look after our children and their 101 activities and hours of homework
- ◆ have the knowledge in our heads of how to spell and what every possible topic in the encyclopedia may hold
- ◆ be psychic and know where ever lost or miss place item went
- ◆ know what each of the members in the family has going, is doing and wants
- ◆ make the meals and clean up after them
- ◆ keep the house clean and the laundry done
- ◆ find time to go to and schedule doctors, dentist and other appointments for the family
- ◆ call and visit parents, sibling, relatives and friends on a regular bases to keep touch (this consumes hours and although enjoyable can be overwhelming too)
- ◆ know how to fix the plumbing, the car and any toy that is not operating at the moment
- ◆ find time to look our best by exercising, hair done, and have clothing ready for any type of unexpected event
- ◆ be rested and in the mood at the end of a long day of finishing up all the above and more

50% of the pressure to do all and more we place on ourselves by trying to live up to some idiotic idea that we are failures if we can't do it all. Why do we think this way and why do we slip into this role in our families? Is it because we are we trying to be more that what our women role models were or like them? Is this a personal pressure we are placing on ourselves or is this something society is imposing? After all we as women never want it said we aren't equal to men or to other women we feel are our competition, that would be failure. Look at men are they trying to do it all and killing themselves to do. Do they stay up late washing dishes and gluing homework projects for the kids when they should be in bed. I don't know how to break the cycle of madness personally as I just have so much I want and need to complete in my day before I can fall asleep. If it's not done I don't sleep so I minds well stay up and finish it is my logic. Of course it's logic I am using when I am so overwhelmed and tired I am not thinking straight anymore...lol. So, my last thought on this subject as write this article in the wee hours of the morning are as such. If anyone has the solution to deprogram oneself into believing that a women we have to do it all and do it well, please for goodness sakes share.

Sharon Graves MacRae is the editor and owner of **Virtual Online Magazine**. The creation of **Virtual Online Magazine** was driven by Sharon's vision of a unique women magazine aimed at putting talented women writers in the spot light and to give online women reader's news they really want to read. Launching of this online magazine comes out of her unique eye for design; added with the love of a challenge, desire for more knowledge and determination. Sharon is also kept busy with her other passions: writing, photography, graphic designing, crafting, painting and being a wife and mother to 4. She has always had a love for the arts in its many forms, which has grown into a **Graves MacRae Designs**, her graphic and web designing business aimed at providing small businesses with quality services (<http://gravesmacraedesigns.com>). As well, Sharon is editor and owner of **CraftsN'Graphics** website and newsletter (<http://craftsngraphics.com>), and several other creative and enterprising websites online.



Our Writers Share Christmas & Thanksgiving Stories & Tips

Thanksgiving

Some of my fondest memories are of Thanksgiving... fabulous home cooked turkey dinners and family traditions. Now a days Thanksgiving can be somewhat of a stressor... my family or the in-laws, who's cooking what and what time should we eat. Maybe this year I'll host, invite both families and everything will be perfect, just as my fond childhood memories... right.

~ Tiffanie D. Lloyd

Christmas Tip:

I keep a list throughout the year for gift ideas as I come up with them or hear somebody mention something they'd love to have. I also keep a note about what I've bought each person in the past. This keeps my stress level down when it's time to shop and ensures that I don't buy somebody a repeat gift.

~ Michele Dupper

Christmas

How I love me some Christmas decorations! Hubby thinks it's ridiculous I'm not to outright say so), but I love to decorate for the holiday's. Inside, outside, ivy, lights, wreaths, bows, centerpieces, mistletoe and figurines... my house is full of Christmas cheer. Every year I must have a fresh new look (because how tacky to decorate the exact same way as the year before, right). But... It can get expensive keeping the cheer fresh and beautiful year after year. So, what I do is take old pieces and turn them into new works of art. A couple new ribbons, some spray paint, and a few new silk floral arrangements gives my decorations the perfect "new" look.

~ Tiffanie D. Lloyd

Christmas short story:

Money was always scarce when I was growing up and because I chose to be a stay at home Mom when the children were small, it was a little scarce then as well. I made a pledge to myself that each child would always get the one thing they wanted for Christmas. That began the art of my children painstakingly making a list each year. It is wonderful to know that something that began when they were so young continues even today. It sure has made shopping for gifts easy, especially when all lists must be completed by December 1st. They know they will never be disappointed!

~ Monica Mirlycourtois

Mind, Body & Spirit

The Goddess in Every Woman

It's time we woman decide to start treating ourselves as the goddess we were born to be. Oh I hear you all groaning or complaining already. A goddess, no way I cannot put myself up on such a pedestal! What will others think? Stop worrying about what others think, and start worrying about your own body and spirit.

How many times have you gone without sleep because you were worried about something or someone in your family? How many times have you neglected yourself over the months or years because you just didn't have the time? I know I can raise my hand on this issue. For years I neglected my own needs. Now I don't mean I didn't shower or make sure I looked at least half way decent when I left the house. I am referring to taking time for me, taking the time to replenish my soul and to revitalize my energy stock.

How many times have you thought in one day, If only I had some time for me, even just 5 minutes to do what I want to do? I have had that thought many times over the years. Oh yes, even I who "preach" about taking time for me; I still tend to neglect myself. When I do, guess what, my body and my spirit feel neglected, depleted, and worn out...I could go on and on but I bet you know exactly what I am talking about.

Our emotions are tied into our body's well being. If you don't believe that try looking at yourself one day when you wake up in a bad mood. What do you see? Take a step outside of your body for one moment...what do you see as you are looking at yourself? Is your

hair fixed? Are you dressed, or are you doing what I did so many times and just worked in my PJ's till 10 minutes before the brood comes home? Are you wearing makeup? Ok don't shoot the messenger here, I don't always wear makeup but I do make sure I have on some moisturizer and some lip gloss or a light colored lipstick.

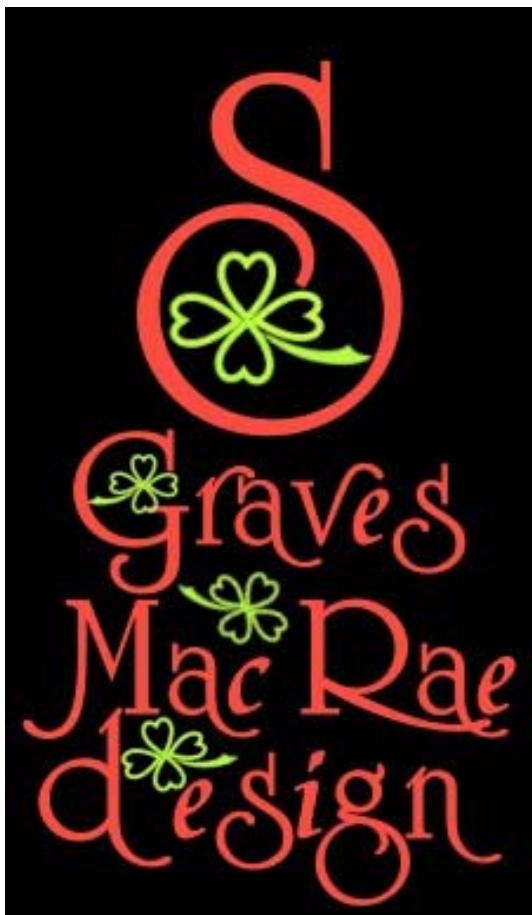
Did you wake up and have to run out into the kitchen and start making lunches for your family? Did you not get enough sleep last night because you stayed up all night working on the project that was due in the morning? I know I have done that plenty of times and what happens? I feel drained, I can't function properly and I feel worn out. I can't work efficiently; I can't get motivated and on those days I push exercise out of my mind totally. Why, because I get into a funk and just don't want to get out of it.

NOT ANY MORE!

It's time to stand up for yourself and for the way you are treating your body! How can you raise your own daughters, influence your nieces, and teach them to love themselves? How can you teach them how to be a good friend, mom, or lover if you are not taking care of yourself and feeling good about your own self? I don't mean you have to look like a run way model every day? Heck, if I had to do that every day it would drive me mad!

OK, go walk over to the closest mirror and take a long look at yourself. Come on, don't be shy. I want you to take one good look at your body, your entire body and love it! Push aside all thoughts of what society tells you what you are suppose to look like. Don't focus on what pops into your mind of what you look like, or what you need to fix or how much weight you need to lose. I want you to find 3 things on your body that you love about yourself. Yes, three things...now I want you to say "I love my eyes, I love my butt, I love my calves..." or whatever it is you do love about your body. It can be anything that springs out at you that you do love.

Rebbekah White was an army wife for 8 years before her husband was medically discharged. Rebbekah currently resides in Sylvania, Ohio where she is the mother to three boys ages 14, 12 and 6. Rebbekah graduated in 1991 from Bedford High School and is the owner of Heal Yourself Talk Radio as well as several other online businesses that deal with the health industry. Rebbekah started Heal Yourself Talk Radio out of a desire to reach out to others and teach them how to learn how to heal their mind, body and soul. After years of dealing with depression, Rebbekah realized she wanted to help others learn how to deal with depression and other areas of life. Heal Yourself Talk Radio is a great starting point for information no matter what you are dealing with in your life. <http://www.healyourselftalk.com/>



As you are standing there giving yourself one good long look in the mirror are you having a hard time finding something you love? STOP right there! Think...what have you heard others say about you? It doesn't matter who said it. My husband likes my butt and my eyes; it took me a long time to accept that fact. I always thought he was just saying that to be nice. WHOA stop right there, take the compliment and love it! Hold it to you! People will not just come up to you and say "I love the color of your eyes," if they don't mean it.

Now that you have found the three things that you like most about yourself I want you to picture yourself as a goddess. OK, for a lot of you this is going to be very hard to do. You may be thinking its selfish or stuck up if you think of yourself in anyway but negative. STOP that stinking thinking right now!

Take a look at some of the most outstanding celebrities in our midst....Bette Midler for instance. The only reason I am using her as an example is because while watching TV the other night I took a good long look at her. According to society rules she should be thin, have a smaller nose, and not be so out spoken. But guess what? How she perceives herself is how she presents herself to others. Bette loves her life. She loves her body and you cannot help noticing what a beautiful woman she is. She is happy with who she is; it emanates from every inch of her body. Her self-love is evident in everything she does.

Now take that size negative zero runway model, sure she looks like she has everything in this world. But the result is she is constantly being told she is too fat....my word too fat a size negative zero...and she is always being told what is wrong with her. All she can see is everything that she is told. We, who "envy" her, for lack of a better term, see a gorgeous body someone we want to look like. All she can see and feel are all the negatives she is hearing day in and day out.

So what if you live around someone who talks down to you? How do you overcome the negative feelings that are being thrown your way? How do you come to accept yourself the way you are the way God created you? You need to learn to love yourself for who you are. Love every inch of your body, love all the flaws, love all the "mistakes and know you are worth it.

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The Mind of Child

YOU CALL THAT MUSIC?

The kids by ages 6-9 had moved well on past babyish songs and folk songs I had taught them and were defining themselves by gravitating to the newer rock and rap styles. My taste in music was passé as was my taste in radio stations since I was usually tuned to all news or talk radio. Around our house we usually had three or four sources of electronic music as a result, my brave little news radio piping up from the kitchen, while the others blasted their respective living room, playroom or bedroom haunts. We were in surround-sound long before it was invented. One of them observed once "I'm so used to rock music that when there's a power failure the silence is really surprising"

Getting them their own radios was necessary but not always a good idea. It would be one thing if they just listened to the music, however loud. But they also liked to adjust the dials, eternally adjusting volume, station, base or turned it on and off every few minutes to 'save the batteries'.

We lived on the prairies near farm country but the kids did not like country music. "Elevators have that horrible knee-slapping country music" Rachel said one day. Another said 'Guitar strumming drives you crazy after a while"

And they dressed, talked and sang as preteens now, not kids.

They were mystified about how other styles could have any appeal. "How come they call the bottom of a shoe the sole? Is that where they write rock and soul music?" "Why do famous orchestras always have the music in front of them and rock bands don't?" "Opera is when someone dies" "Heavy metal music is like having ten iron bars pushed on your head. You can't stand the pain"

I started to notice how closely attuned kids' moods are to music, how it seems to capture for them something hard to put in words. They mentioned these effects subtly. "If you sing sad songs, it just makes you sadder"

They figured out how songs stick in your head. "I think the song that moves in your mind all day is the first one you hear in the morning"

They grew cynical though. "This song keeps pretending to end and then it sneaks back" "This song is pretty repetitive, isn't it?" They noticed some oddities of their all rock request line stations. "I sometimes think maybe the request line is faked" "How can they say it's 'nonstop music' if they talk between songs?" "Did you notice that most rock songs have the same beat?" "Have you noticed that the guys for rock stations all talk the same?"

Watching rock videos on TV changed a few opinions. "Sometimes I like a song till I see the singer"

They wondered what songs were like when I was young and noticed differences from their own style. "In time the songs have gotten shorter" "Why do most of your songs have people feeling sorry for themselves in them?"

They got sick of the news, which was my contact with the world out there. "The thing is, on the news anybody would deck a person that would talk that long in real life" They noticed that the news on their stations was not very detailed and sometimes they wanted to know more. One commented: "The one thing you can't be is a really good rock and roll station and a really good news station"

Over a few years they found personal favorites, different from each other's preferences, fine distinctions to match mood and personality. One said "I like slow rock songs"

Another wanted music loud. "If any music is played softly, then it's more sad" Another said "I really love fast songs". Listening to marching music once Danny said "If I'm feeling sad I listen to this kind of music cause it really make you cheer up" They were discovering who they are, through what music spoke to them "I don't like that song cause I have a memory that goes with it" "I like songs with a lot of beat"

When one picked a song as her 'favorite' she was a bit resentful if someone else picked the same one too. And if she chose to vary it to take back ownership and got criticized, once one of them exploded' It's MY song. I can make it any tune I want" And then we'd hear "The thing about rock songs is you don't always have to be exactly on tune"

Beverley Smith is a longtime women's and children's rights activist and a teacher. She is married with four adult children, four grandchildren and lives in Canada but networks internationally. She is a passionate believer that 'childhood matters'. Beverley Smith taught school for several years and then was home for several more when her children were young. A longtime student of second languages she observed closely how her small children learned English and developed a way to teach them to read based on insights from childhood development and from language studies. The course she created was in essence written by them, as a response to what she saw worked. It is unique. She has also created and used for her own children a step by step introduction to math, a several volume introduction to science and one also to history, chronological, problems and solutions based and geared to short daily lessons for children from age 5 to grade 9. A longtime advocate of public education she did however home-school her children to supplement what they learned at school and to give them a comprehensive and different approach. The four are now a national magazine editor, a family lawyer, a law professor, and a medical doctor who also has a doctorate in biomedical engineering. Her website for the reading course is <http://www.anchorsandsails.org>



Sometimes when they noticed I liked a song they liked, they abandoned it, or snickered if I was absently singing along getting the words wrong as I cooked. But they noticed which ones I liked even if they hated them and once for my birthday Danny played one of 'my' songs on the piano. "I'll play "She's out of my life" just to satisfy your little needs"

When they did like a song, they played it constantly. And I wondered in fact what part of it they loved – the lyrics, the message, the tune, or the rhythm even. It seemed that they differed in that regard. Danny loved rhythm, like her dad, who barely even registers melody or lyrics. One of them listened closely to lyrics though and mocked some "You look so good and feel so right. Now let me tell you about the girl I met last night"

Their explanations for choice were vague. "There's one song that really make me relax – Don't Walk Away". "I concentrate best with the stereo on. I can't concentrate in a vacuum" "I like this kind of music – royal with big beats – but it does get to be a bit of a drag"

Their assumption that their music was best was perhaps understandable- they could not put the reasons in words but assumed others had the same values. As one said, giving us all a choice of car station to listen to "Do you want to hear KIK FM or that boring other rot?"

And it seemed that one way you could tell they were becoming more interested in music was in what they disliked not what they liked. Contrary to what I had thought, that people good at music must like all music, I discovered that musical people simply have very strong feelings about music – which means there are also many styles they hate. Music is something that touches their emotions strongly either way. . And so I would as often hear criticism about music as praise. "When that band makes its first sheet of music, they just splash ink on the page". "Who does this song? I'm gonna sue them personally" "I love the ending to this song. Do you know why? Cause the song is ending" "That song feels like a brain wave pattern to me. Like when I have bad dreams I frequently have that pattern mixed in"

They found some of the lyrics sappily sentimental. "I don't get this song. I guess it's a man convincing a girl that she needs him" "I like singing if it's boyish, not kind of love songs" "Most of those songs are about some affliction with a girl"

They felt that they were maturing according to music taste. One said "When I was little I used to think that bands were just sitting on the radio there live"

And they took pride in liking music that older people disliked. Or that was not appropriate for some locations. As one said "So this is why they don't play rock n roll at fancy restaurants – so you don't eat fast"

But music, somehow touched them and indeed was an international language. Hearing a song by Barbara Streisand in one movie, Jason said "What she's saying is about a feeling I have sometimes when I'm dreaming. Sort of indescribable"



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In The Kitchen

A Heritage Thanksgiving

Images of big, beautiful turkeys with colorful plumage and tail feathers are everywhere during the Thanksgiving holiday season. For many of us, eating a turkey with the family on this holiday is a time honored tradition and in some special way makes us feel very connected to our ancestors. However, the turkeys that were most likely served on this holiday in the past were quite different than the majority served today. In fact, if you are under 50, you have probably never even tasted one of these turkeys. Now referred to as heritage turkeys, they are the distant relatives of the common Broad-Breasted White industrial breed of turkeys now sold in 99% of grocery stores and until very recently they were almost extinct.

Our modern commercial turkeys were popularized by poultry processors in the 1960's because of their large quantities of white meat, the preference of most Americans. They were also desirable because of their white feathers which do not discolor their skin. Unfortunately, to promote the meat development, their bodies and growth rates have been altered so most of them are full of growth supplements as well as antibiotics. They now have unnaturally large breasts, short breast bones and short legs. The majority of them are so large that their legs cannot support their own weight and they are not able to walk. They must be bred through artificial insemination because they are no longer able to breed naturally. So, basically, these birds just sit in one place and eat until they reach their market weight so that we may enjoy their tender meat.

On the contrary, heritage turkeys are raised dining on fresh grass and insects. They walk, fly, breed, raise their own chicks and even help control farmer's pest problems. They are prized for their flavor, texture and beautiful plumage. The heritage breeds of turkeys are the Standard Bronze, Bourbon Red, Jersey Buff, Slate, Black Spanish, Narragansett and White Holland. Raising heritage turkeys is more time consuming and costly, but it preserves genetic variety and keeps alive an American culinary tradition that dates back to the first years of English settlement. According to the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, turkeys must meet all of the following criteria to qualify as a heritage turkey:

1. Naturally mating: must be reproduced and genetically maintained through natural mating, with expected fertility rates of 70-80%. This means that turkeys marketed as "heritage" must be the result of naturally mating pairs of both grandparent and parent stock.
2. Long productive outdoor lifespan: must have a long productive lifespan. Breeding hens are commonly productive for 5-7 years and breeding toms for 3-5 years. They must also have a genetic ability to withstand the environmental rigors of outdoor production systems.
3. Slow growth rate: must have a slow to moderate rate of growth. Today's heritage turkeys reach a marketable weight in about 28 weeks, giving the birds time to develop a strong skeletal structure and healthy organs prior to building muscle mass. This growth rate is identical to that of the commercial varieties of the first half of the 20th century.

Raising the turkeys in this way is not only more humane, but also results in a much more flavorful bird. There are four factors that influence flavor in animals - the fundamental underlying flavor of its meat, its age, how it was raised, and what it ate. Older animals have more flavor than younger ones and heritage turkeys are allowed to grow at a much slower rate, about twice as long, than the commercialized Broad-Breasted White. The more an animal moves around, the more interesting its flavor. Obviously, turkeys raised on a pasture get much more exercise than those sitting in buildings unable to walk. Turkeys that have a diet of green grass, plants, and insects have a deeper taste than birds fed exclusively a grain diet.

In addition to great flavor, roasting a heritage turkey to perfection is much easier than the industrialized white. Since they have smaller breasts there is a better balance between the dark and white meat so the white meat cooks quicker than the dark meat and there is no need to cover the breast with foil to keep it from drying out while the rest of the bird cooks. If the breast is covered during roasting, it should be done with oiled parchment paper, not foil, which is then removed 30 minutes before the turkey is finished roasting. Heritage turkeys are leaner and smaller so fast cooking at high temperatures is a better method than slow roasting all day long. They should be cooked at 425-450 degrees F until the internal temperature reaches 140-150 degrees F. Remember not to let the tip of the thermometer touch the bone. (Note: This is different than the USDA recommendation of 160F-180F, but these temperatures will dry out a heritage turkey. Heritage birds are free of disease and bacteria so they do not need extreme temperatures to make them safe for consumption.) The reduced cooking time will not allow stuffing to become fully cooked so cook the stuffing first and place inside the turkey before roasting.



Michele Dupper is a writer, photographer and the owner of Truly Organic Beauty (<http://www.trulyorganicbeauty.com>). She is originally from Pittsburgh, PA and now lives in sunny FL with her husband and their 1 ½ year old son. She has been transitioning to a naturally healthy and green lifestyle since starting a family. Michele enjoys educating others about living a more natural lifestyle that is beneficial for the health of our bodies as well as our planet.



Alternatively, you can experiment with adding a piece of quartered fruit like an orange or an apple inside the turkey instead of stuffing. You can also try adding butter or oil under the breast skin to add flavor and moisture during roasting. As always, bring the bird to room temperature before cooking and be sure to let it rest for 10-15 minutes before carving.

Thanks to the efforts of organizations like the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy and Slow Food USA, heritage turkeys are increasing in popularity, but in the late 1990's they were on the brink of extinction. They realized that we must eat them to save them because the more we eat, the more there will be. By continuing to eat heritage turkeys and supporting the breeders the quality of the birds will only improve.

Instead of injecting or deep fat frying a commercial white turkey for added flavor why not enjoy a naturally flavorful and moist heritage turkey? Splurge once a year and make your Thanksgiving feast special. It will require some planning on your part if you would like to try a heritage turkey as they are not always readily available. It may be too late to buy one for this years Thanksgiving as the farmers usually need to know by February, but now is the perfect time to look into options for 2009. Visit the Local Harvest website at www.localharvest.org to locate a farmer in your area or to purchase online. You can also check with The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy for farmers near you.

Health

A glass of red wine, keeps the fat away?

As November rolls around the corner. We all know what that means. Stress, family, friends, headaches, eating, laughter, eating, cooking, eating more, drinks, parties, turkey's, stress and eating more. November is food month!

But isn't their a way to drink, eat and be merry?

Yes their is! Their is now (Jan 20th 08) reach, stating that "if you drink red wine while your eating, the alcohol tricks or mixes with food which slows down the stomach. And then decreases the amount of food consumed at the meal." Of course Arthur Agatston, MD, always reaches for a red wine due to the antioxidants that red wines contains.

All though not all red wines contain antioxidants. Red wines do contain more antioxidants then say beer.

Drinking red wines offers benefits similar to a low-calorie diet. Red wines can be very powerful calorie killer to help you live a longer healthier life.

If red wines are used moderately, red wines can be a powerful agent and increase HDL the "good" cholesterol, by 10-12%. Higher levels of HDL are linked to lower risks of heart problems.

The same study in the New England Journal of Medicine, included that women of ages 70-81, who drank one five ounce glass of red wine a day. Have had a 23% brain boost and reduced the risk of mental decline. Compared to the other women who had never drank or drank heavily.

An even more recent study in Oct 7th 08. Sows red wines may reduce the risk of lung cancer in some male and female cases, especially smokers! Women smokers who drank one five (5) ounce glass of red wine a day, had a 60% lower chance of getting lung cancer.

The evidence is in! Not only does red wine relax you, drinking one glass of wine this Turkey Day will also help your heart and brain!

Have a glass of red wine for me! Happy Turkey Day!

Pandora Jackson is a mother of two ADHD girls, one of which does not speak well. So this puts her in field of studying a lot of health related topics. In her free time she does a lot of writing, writing short stories, poems, letters to medical centers, writing columns on various health related topics, off hand. Also in her free time she sell Avon products, through my web store www.youravon.com/pandorajackson and face to face. She is going on her third month and have made it to Sales Leadership. Next goal Unit Sales Leader! Which she hope to accomplish. If you are interested in an Avon career please stop on by!



Relationships

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring, is increasingly being recognized as important in small business development. It has been acknowledged that newly created companies thrive when they have some form of coaching or mentoring as part of their growth. The trend for coaching and mentoring has grown dramatically throughout the world and today, many companies automatically assigning a mentor or coach to new employees.

The following provides a brief overview, understanding and insight into just exactly what coaching and mentoring means when it comes to small business development.

Coaching and Mentoring – Is there a difference between Coaching and Mentoring?

The two terms seem to be increasingly linked and are often used interchangeably.

Coaching: we see a business, corporate or executive coaching in much the way we see a sports coach. This person sets specific goals and objectives, sees what you need to do to achieve them and works with you on target setting professional and personal development, expansion of your skills base and offers practical and relevant advice and guidance.

Mentoring: a mentor can almost be seen as a wise, experienced friend or favourite aunt or uncle type person. A mentor leads by example and is a role model. They might be very good at helping you see the big picture and understand the politics of the organization you work for.

A coach can be a mentor and a mentor can be a coach, or the role can be rolled into one. The key is that whatever term you use, the person being coached or mentored gets unbiased support and guidance.

Benefits of Coaching and Mentoring

When you work with a coach or mentor you benefit in many ways:

- Have a safe place to offload
- Develop skills you already have
- Learn new skills
- Gain insight into yourself and the people you work with
- Get unbiased, confidential support
- Gain fresh perspectives on your issues
- Get advice, suggestions and options

Coaching and Mentoring Theory

You can't pigeonhole people or impose a template of how coaching and mentoring should look.

A good coach or mentor should:

- Maintain confidentiality
- Excellent listening and responding skills
- Non-judgmental
- Objective outlook
- Advises rather than tells
- Has the individuals best interests at heart
- Makes no promises about outcomes

Donna Messer is Canada's leading networking expert. As an author and speaker she is in demand at conferences throughout North America. She provides interactive and motivational keynotes and workshops. Often the MC, she facilitates events to make sure that the networking truly does happen. Messer truly walks her talk, showing by example how to maximize the time you spend at conferences, trade shows and events. For more information www.connectuscanada.com



Has a high degree of integrity

Using a Coach or Mentor

- Meet with them on a regular basis
- Rely on them for guidance, not answers
- Be honest

A mentor isn't a dumping ground

Coaches understand and motivate their small business clients. They build on their strengths and help shore up their weaknesses. They recognize natural talents and they help develop self-confidence. Coaches are realistic and honest about what a client can achieve. They encourage and push when necessary to help clients reach their identified goals. They share wisdom and insight on life based on personal experience.

Coaching Skills

- Advisor - Advising clients on the training and knowledge needed to succeed.
- Assessor - Assessing clients in their ability to utilize training and resources.
- Counselor - Resolving minor emotional problems
- Demonstrator - Demonstrating to the clients the skills required them to achieve their goals.
- Friend - A personal relationship is built when providing coaching. You become someone with whom they can discuss their problems and share their successes. It is important to keep personal information confidential.
- Facilitator - Identifying suitable resources, events, conferences, etc to help achieve overall objectives.
- Fact finder - Gathering data on relevant topics to keep abreast of current industry statistics.
- Fountain of knowledge – Answering questions on any topic related to business development.
- Instructor - Instructing clients on the skills needed for their chosen business.
- Mentor – Guiding and sharing your experiences. You are a role model.
- Motivator - Maintain the motivation needed to succeed. .

Supporter - Competition can be nerve racking. You are a cheerleader when it comes to the pressures of building a small business.

Is Coaching an Art or a Science?

Science

To support coaching there is a wealth of scientific information based on research conducted with professionals around the world. Information is available to support the coach and the client in all areas of training and development. There are a number of scientific models and methods to measure and analyze the client's performance.

Art

The art of coaching comes when the coach has to analyze the scientific data and convert it into coaching and training programs to help develop the clients own natural skills. This analysis process relies heavily on the coach's experience and knowledge of the industry and the client.

By understanding the science, which is the foundation of training, a well-designed training program can be developed that will help the client reach their full potential. The art is understanding the science and applying it.

A good coach looks for the **4C's**: Concentration, Confidence, Control and Commitment.

GREAT GIFT IDEAS IN A JAR

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Birthday Party Snacks All the Guests Will Rave About

By Christine Steendahl

You can treat the birthday party guests to tasty snacks! A lot of these recipes can be modified to coordinate with the theme of your celebration. Providing individual cupcakes for each guest is a great way to celebrate a kid's birthday party. The big cake can be accompanied by little cupcakes that follow the theme of the birthday party.

Some favorite birthday party recipes are mice cupcakes, pizza rollups and banana boats. They are all simple and fun snacks. These kids' birthday party suggestions will excite any birthday girl or boy.

Mice Cupcakes
Makes 8 "mice"

Ingredients:

- *1 pkg. Chocolate Cake mix
- *8 scoops vanilla ice cream
- *16 sandwich or mint cookies
- *Small candies-red hots
- *M&M's candies or skittles
- *1 pkg. shoestring licorice

Instructions:

1. Prepare cake mix according to package for cupcakes.
2. Fill muffin cups 2/3 full.
3. Bake until toothpick comes out clean
4. Cool completely and remove from pan
5. Top each cake with a scoop of ice cream
6. Decorate each cupcake to resemble a mouse Use 2 mint cookies for the ears, use the candies for eyes nose and mouth.
7. Cut and insert licorice for the whiskers.
8. Place cupcakes in the freezer for 1/2 hour before serving.

Searching for a great treat for a summer birthday party? Try Banana Boats. They are a tasty party treat, especially for summer birthday fun.

Ingredients:

- *1 banana per child
- *Ice cream
- *Mini marshmallows and
- *Chocolate chips
- *Whip cream

Instructions:

1. Slit each banana open lengthwise.
2. Put ice cream, mini marshmallows and chocolate chips in the slit.
3. Add whip cream to the top

Enjoy!

Pizza Rolls

Who doesn't love pizza rolls? They have the same great flavor of pizza but in a cool, convenient shape. The guests at your child's birthday party are sure to love this great pizza roll recipe. Their parents will probably phone you the very next day asking for the recipes because their little ones keep raving about it.

Ingredients:

- *2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- *1/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
- *1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- *1 can (13.8 oz.) refrigerated pizza crust
- *1 cup 2% Milk Shredded Reduced Fat Mozzarella Cheese
- *2 Tbsp. chopped onions (optional)
- *1 pkg. Pepperoni slices
- *1-1/2 cups marinara sauce

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Mix butter, Italian seasoning and garlic powder until well blended
3. Set mixture aside.
4. Unroll dough onto un greased baking sheet
5. Press into 15x10-inch rectangle
6. Brush with half of the butter mixture
7. Sprinkle with cheese and onions
8. Top evenly with pepperoni.
9. Starting at one of the short ends roll up dough to form a log.
10. Pinch seams and ends together to seal.
11. Position log lengthwise, seam-side down, in center of baking sheet.
12. Brush with remaining butter mixture.
13. Bake 15 min. or until lightly browned.
14. Let cool 5 min.
15. Cut crosswise into 12 slices.
16. Serve with the marinara sauce.

Yield: 12 servings

Add your favorite cut-up fresh vegetables with the cheese and onions.

Substitute olive oil for the melted butter.

For more fun kid friendly ideas go to <http://www.kidapprovedmeals.com>

Communication Prescription

Confident Communication:

4 Tips for Overcoming Fear of Public Speaking

My students and I have been talking a great deal lately about the fear of public speaking. I have read that many people fear it more than snakes, airplanes, or even "Snakes on a Plane!" Having taught Public Speaking for over 16 years myself, I can honestly say that I still get some of what I choose to call "nervous energy" before I speak. Luckily for me, nothing cements information into one's mind like teaching it! So I have an entire box of tools to share regarding overcoming one's fears in this and other areas. You may not speak in public for a living, but we all have opportunities to share our voices--business and departmental meetings and conferences, PTA meetings, civic or hobby organizations, just to name a few. If we avoid speaking up, we not only miss those opportunities, but we deprive others of a chance to learn from our experience and expertise. Stephen Covey, famed author of the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" wrote another, lesser-known book entitled, "The 8th Habit" which says that effectiveness is only meaningful when we use it to help others find their voices. As an instructor and "weekend" Communication Consultant, I love watching the lights come on for people as they overcome their "Communication Apprehension." Some of the best experience I have to share with a nervous speaker?

1) Water the roots, not the lemons.

If you have a lemon tree, and your lemons are drying out, do you water the lemons? Of course not. Self-confidence is much the same--our greatest benefits are from nurturing the roots of self-esteem, rather than focusing directly on confidence in public speaking. Start by shaking hands with every new person you meet. No "dead fish," and no "knuckle-busters." A firm, but loose grip is best. And smile--with the teeth showing. It is amazing how smiling actually improves attitude and confidence. Don't believe me? Check out the evolutionary concept of intermodal matching. It says that, as infants, we learn which facial expressions accompany different emotions by mimicking the expressions given by our caregivers, and then examining how those expressions make us feel! Of course, endorphins are released when we smile. Other endorphin-releasing activities can also boost confidence, by lifting overall mood (regular exercise and small amounts of dark chocolate and can do wonders!) I also challenge you to avoid all negative self-talk. Americans are addicted to being right, and do you know the easiest way to ensure one's being right? Predicting one's own failure. Saying, "I hate public speaking," "I am so afraid," or "I'm not good at that"? We can actually make ourselves fail. Instead, why not take a risk? Predict success. Or at least stop predicting failure. You may have a different audience each time you say something negative against yourself or your performance, but one person hears it every time. You. Consider correcting yourself when you catch yourself engaging in negative self-talk. Stop yourself, and say something like, "Actually, I have historically thought that was true, but I read this fantastic article in Virtual Online Magazine that has really opened my eyes"

2) Focus on Service.

If I am thinking about you, I cannot be thinking about me. Topic choice? Focus on what will help the audience. Sources? What will most benefit the audience? Attention-getter? What will hook this particular audience? A powerful piece of advice from sage public speaking textbook author Stephen Beebe says, "Let the audience write the speech." Wouldn't it be nice if he meant that literally? Of course, he means that every element of the speech is optimized by a focus on the audience. can help the nervous speaker harness his or her fear and channel it into energy. Holding these thoughts These thoughts, then, can supplant the old ways of thinking like "I am so nervous!" "Is my fly open?" or the ever-popular, "Does this speech make my butt look big?"

3) Learn more.

Yes, public speaking is considered the #1 fear in American society. Could hearing that statistic actually tell us to be afraid? What if the statistic said that public speaking was America's favorite pass-time, and that baseball was our #1 fear? Ever hear of the "nocebo effect"? Studies show that cancer patients given placebo-chemo often lose their hair as if they were administered the real thing. There is at least one documented case of a man who died from cancer that he did not have (according to Discovery Channel special, "The Placebo Effect"). Fascinating. Brings a whole new light to the statement that, "The only thing we have to fear is fear, itself." I test initial and post-semester levels of student Communication Anxiety with a questionnaire called the PRPSA (Personal piece of advice: Speak!!! In the communication field, we call it "systematic desensitization." It means that the more you speak in public, the less sensitive to it you become. Start small. And from the heart. All the rest can fall into place.

Report of Public Speaking Anxiety--the 34-item test and its scoring method). Many are surprised at their dramatic drop in score. Last semester, one student dropped over 30 points on this 136-point measure! Guess why her jump was so impressive. Because an in-depth analysis of her questionnaire showed that the items she scored high on were all of the items about anticipating giving a speech, rather than those assessing nervousness during or after a speech. In other words, she was afraid of being afraid.

Karla Larson Hunter, Ph.D.,

assistant communication professor at Dakota Wesleyan University, writes, consults, teaches and speaks to empower others to optimize their communication in all facets of life. For more of Hunter's tips on enhancing your communication, or to request workshops, seminars, or lectures, see her blog at : <http://www.huntercomm.blogspot.com/>



In class, we also discuss the evolutionary view of this type of fear. If I can inherit my grandfather's blue eyes or my mother's sense of humor, going back a bit further, could our ancestors have passed down a genetic code that teaches us how to react to fear? Picture cave people. Not those dressed up Geico guys, but actual non-speaking, no locks on the doors, saber-tooth-tiger-outside-the-cave-type cave people. Their fears are of physical dangers. Someone or something might steal their food or harm them or their loved ones. Their options to escape these dangers when they arise? Fight or flee (hence the popularly touted, little fully discussed "fight or flight response."). Their bodies react to make them stronger, more attentive and faster. Eyes widen in surprise: this allows them to take in more of the scene. Extremities shake and they may sweat, because both blood and adrenaline are pumping to all the right places to help them run or hit, as needed. These are wonderful built-in defense mechanisms. And by fighting or fleeing the source of danger, we "burn off" the adrenaline and other built-up physical responses to fear. The problem is that our bodies have carried with them down through the ages this stone-age computer program, and no one has deleted it from our collective (sub)consciousness. Therefore, today, when we are afraid, even though our fears may be social (e.g., your boss asks you to speak about what you learned at last week's conference. At the weekly business meeting. In front of 12 people. In 5 minutes.), our bodies react. Your eyes widen, your cardiovascular system and adrenal glands begin working overtime. You may perspire. Well, you can't punch your boss in the face and run out of the room. Well, you can, but you may not like the consequences. So what do you do? You work on reprogramming. Channel that energy, and remember to call it "energy." It is there to serve you, not to harm you. Use it to be enthusiastic and engaging. Gesture, and use disciplined movement and visual aids to "burn up" some of that energy.

4) And finally, forget that old advice about looking over people's heads.

Look us in the eye. And I do mean "eye." Looking in both eyes at once can feel awkward, so pick an eye, any eye. I promise, no one can tell. Try it. The wonderful thing about giving eye contact is that it can act as a magnet, attracting the eyes (and hence, a greater level of attention from) your audience. People can feel when someone is looking at them. Try it. Look at a random stranger in the mall. She or he will turn and "catch" you pretty quickly. Any further actions on your part are your responsibility not mine—look away, or go introduce yourself. That's up to you.

Now that you know everything you ever wanted to know and more about the fear of speaking in public, and the knowledge and experience that has helped me and hundreds of frightened students to overcome and harness their fears, I actually have one more.

Baby Central

A Day at the Pediatrician by Judith Nelson

How many times had I sat in this office? The sniffing of small noses, whines of those truly not feeling well and sounds of mothers trying to control antsy children who had been waiting too long on a sunny afternoon. As I viewed this scene in front of me, I was momentarily taken back; the years that had disappeared so rapidly flooded back to my memory and senses. As I stared on, a glance to my right startled me out of my reverie. It was the sight of my son's size 14 man's shoe. This humongous foot belongs to my baby, my twenty year old baby who was home from college for the weekend and feeling crappy enough for me to take him to his pediatrician for an office visit.

I must say that I always loved my pediatrician, the older gentleman was always available for any question or worry that I had no matter what time of the day or night. He always reassured my fears, gave me solid advice or boosted my self confidence about being a new mother. Over the years, our dear doctor saw us through broken bones, emergency room visits and a litany of minor illnesses and concerns. When my son was in high school, he really did not get sick often; so we continued with the yearly well visits. Our older, much-loved pediatrician retired but in his place his son was taking over the practice, a perfect a transition for all involved. Our younger version of his father, reassured us that my "baby" was not too old for them to see and they would be happy to see him through out college if necessary.

So that brings me to today. We have signed in and have taken our seat. The receptionist then calls for Patrick's mommy or daddy to please come up. I go and pay my co-pay and sit down again. Others in the waiting room, begin to look at us with strange looks on their faces. The nurse calls out Patrick's name and when he stands and walks in, so tall towering well above the young nurse in her brightly colored Dora scrubs, she doesn't even flinch but smiles warmly towards him. The nurse weighs my son, two hundred and three pounds; has the scale ever gone that high? She puts us in an office and we wait.

It is there where my son, although feverous, and I have a beautiful mother and son chat; the type of conversation that we don't seem to have the quiet time to do nowadays. A new diminutive doctor walks in and begins to ask him his symptoms and examine him. I have to remind myself not to answer for him, to let him answer. She is not even looking my way. All of her attention is on my baby, where it should be. The doctor doesn't seem to be phased at all by reaching up on her tippy toes to check his eyes, nose and throat. She competently completes her examination, gives advice and reassures my son; all the things our older pediatrician used to do. We leave, both of us feeling better in our own way.

As we exit, I glance over at the young moms. I am so envious. They have years of smiles, sunny days and yes even tears in front of them. I want to yell and shake them and tell their tired faces to enjoy every single solid solitary second of this ...bliss? The man towering above me has grown into such a fine son and he has gone with his mother to the pediatrician, all six feet four inches of him. He silently looks at me and we smile. And I remind myself to savor this moment shared between a mom and her son.

10 Essential Criteria For Choosing Your Target Market

A specific group of people you will focus on selling your services to is your target market. This is not to be confused with the problem you will be solving for this group.

Why choose a target market?, You need to decide exactly who your audience is before you sell your services. Deciding on your target market lays a critical foundation for your business. When you get clear about who your target market is, you will:

- know where to focus your selling and marketing efforts.
- know where to focus your research efforts. You want to intimately understand your market: the problems they have and the language they speak. The greater your level of understanding the more magnetic you will become.

Your target market will determine your income and success. Choose the wrong one and you will waste a lot of time and money with very little results.

Whatever target market —TM— you choose, check to see that it meets the following 10 essential criteria:

1. Your TM has a big problem. They think about it all the time, it keeps them awake at night.
2. Your TM wants the problem solved. The impact and cost of the problem is big enough that they will act to solve it (some people have problems they are quite happy to live with!).
3. You can easily find your TM. Do they belong to associations? Are there conferences for this target market? Are there publications? Where do they hangout? If it's not easy to find your target market, it will cost you a lot of money to find them.
4. Your TM has money to spend. No point having a terrific service if your target market hasn't the money to pay for it. I know this sounds basic but it's often overlooked.
5. Your TM has a history of paying to have this problem solved. You want to focus on a target market where there is a proven track record of problems and people paying to solve them. A good sign is if your competitors are selling similar services to the target market.
6. There's enough of your TM out there to sustain a business. How many people or businesses are in your target market? Realistically how many will become your clients and what will that be worth to you? Is that enough?
7. You enjoy working with your TM. Think about what types of people are in your target market and visualize being with them day in and day out. How does that feel? Will you feel energized or drained at the end of the day? Remember, you are also in business to enjoy yourself so make sure you will enjoy working with this target market.
8. You have a passion for helping and serving this TM. Passion is an essential ingredient for selling your services.
9. You have valuable expertise and experience you can offer. Your target market will want to buy from people who are experts in their field. Think about what specific expertise and experience you can offer your target market.
10. Your TM fits with your ultimate lifestyle package. What hours do you want to work? Where do you want to work? How do you want to work? Does this fit in with your target market? Ensure that working with your target market will enable you to live the kind of life you want to live.

Once you have found your target market, the next step is to refine it even further. Decide on the profile of your ideal client. What sort of person are they? Decide on their demographics and psychographics. Demographics are the basic facts like age, gender, income, location, etc. Psychographics are their characteristics, values etc. This will enable you to focus even more.

The clearer you are about who you want to do business with, the more you will attract exactly the clientele you're looking for. You will then need your Sales Conversation skills to convert them to clients.

Tessa Stowe teaches small business owners and recovering salespeople 10 simple steps to turn conversations into clients without being sales-y or pushy. Sign-up for her FREE monthly newsletter that is full of tips on how to sell your services by just being yourself at <http://www.salesconversation.com>



Craft Corner



Fall Table Décor

Fall is such a beautiful season. I love fall colors, and I love fall decorations. I especially enjoy making my own decorations (for any season/holiday). Some of my favorite fall crafts are table decorations; because everyone needs a beautiful table to serve their Thanksgiving feast on. Here are a few of my favorite decorating ideas.

Tiffany Lloyd is a stay at home turned work at home entrepreneur and mom who enjoys scrapbooking, card making, sewing and just about anything crafty. She might not know much about a lot of things, but she sure knows how to use a glue gun! When she isn't working, homeschooling her kids or preparing a meal, you can find her in her craft room (scissors at the ready). To get to know her better, visit her at her blog at <http://ourlloydlife.blogspot.com>. And be sure to check out some of her work at <http://mykidsoccasion.com>.



Pumpkin candle holders

Get a few of those mini pumpkins and some candlesticks. Cut out holes in the top of the pumpkins just big enough for the candles to fit into and dig out the pumpkin seeds with a spoon. Stick the candle inside and there you have it. Place your pumpkin candle holders on the table and surround them with leaves, small pine-cones and/or vines for added effect.



Pumpkin centerpiece

Cut off the top of a pumpkin and clean out the seeds. Use the hollowed out pumpkin as a pot holder or vase and fill it with an arrangement of fall flowers. You could even place a candle in the middle of it and/or place it on the table and surround it with more flowers, gourds, mini pumpkins and other fall décor.



Thankful tree centerpiece

You'll need a small flower pot filled with dirt and a small tree branch. Take the leaves off of the branch and plant it in the pot. Use construction paper to cut out leaves and after each member in your family has written on them the things they are thankful for hang them on your "tree" using string and a hole punch or ornament hangers or straightened paper clips. Decorate your pot with paint or stickers and tie a bow around its rim.



Paper-towel roll napkin holders

Cut a paper towel roll into 1 inch (or smaller) wide sections. Then get some fall printed/colored fabric and cover each ring using a glue gun to adhere the fabric to the inside of the rings. Then place ribbons, bows or a flower in the center of each ring.

House and Home

Home Heating Costs

– Tips on How to Save Money this Winter

With the cold weather fast approaching combined with the dire state of our National economy, people are looking for ways to cut costs and save money like never before.

There are many ways you and your family can save money this winter while keeping your home warm and protected from the outside elements and bitter cold weather.

Here are a few tips to help you cut costs and save money this winter.

It is important to keep your thermostat set at the lowest comfortable temperature, usually between 65F – 70F degree. For every degree above 70F you go your heating costs will rise an additional 7% – 10%. It is recommended that you keep your home at 70F degrees during the day and 60-65F degrees at night. Purchasing a programmable thermostat will also help set the temperature properly throughout the day.

Heating vents should be vacuumed and cleaned regularly to make sure that air flows properly. Make sure that furniture, drapes, carpet, rugs and other household items are not blocking the vents. Make sure outside heating units are also free from leaves and other debris to make sure they work for efficiently.

Lower your thermostat when no one is home.

Make sure doors and windows are closed when the heat is on. Make sure to lock your windows. Locking windows helps to create a seal to prevent air flowing in and out of your home.

Clean your heating filters at least twice a season or as per the manufacturer's recommendations.

Lower your hot water thermostat to 120F. Taking 5 minute hot showers also helps to reduce heating costs. For additional savings have your hot water heater wrapped in an insulation blanket installed by a licensed Heating and Plumbing Contractor.

If you have ceiling fans in your home reverse the direction of the blades to force warm air down into the room.

If you have a window air conditioning unit and are unable to remove it make sure to cover up both the inside and outside to prevent any drafts or hot air escaping.

If you use your oven for cooking leave the door opened a little afterwards to allow for the hot air to heat the kitchen.

If you are not using your fireplace make sure the flue damper is tightly closed. It is also recommended to get your chimney cleaned at least once a year for safety.

Install a humidifier in your home. Hot air makes your skin very dry causing you to lose moisture which makes you feel colder. Using a humidifier increases moisture in your home and helps to maximize your comfort.

Make sure your attic, walls and windows are properly insulated. Caulk around your windows to cover up any holes. Add weather stripping around your doors.

Have your home inspected by a heating expert to ensure that your home heating is running efficiently.

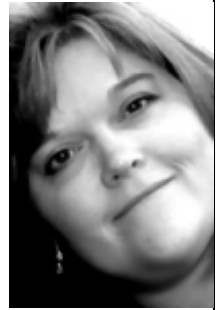
Don't close off more than 10% of unused rooms in your home. Your heat pump works best with free airflow throughout your home.

During the day open in the blinds and the drapes on the sunny side of your home to allow sunlight in to help warm your home. Close your drapes and blinds at night to help cut off any heating loss.

Dress warmly when you are at home. If you feel a bit chilly put on some socks or slippers and a sweater. Drink some tea or hot cocoa or other hot beverage to increase your body temperature.

There are many ways you can help keep your home toasty warm and comfortable this winter. Most of these tips are low cost or free to do which will end up saving you a lot of money this winter.

Kimberly Vetrano is a freelance writer and photographer. She currently resides in the suburbs of New York City with her husband, two children, four cats and a dog. When she is not tending to her family, or her business, [Everyday-Occasions.com](http://www.Everyday-Occasions.com) (<http://www.Everyday-Occasions.com>), she enjoys photography and blogging on her favorite topics at [KimberlyVetrano.com](http://www.KimberlyVetrano.com) (<http://www.KimberlyVetrano.com>) and [She Scribes](http://www.SheScribes.com) (<http://www.SheScribes.com>) as well as her newest endeavor, digital scrap booking at [City Scribe Scraps](http://www.CityScribeScraps.com) (<http://www.CityScribeScraps.com>)



Women's Issues & News

A Survivor Speaks Out:

All of us survivors of Family Violence who are subjected to the vindictive actions of an ex partnerS know that we are eventually going to die by their hands. The police, courts, and other agencies can't really do anything because the abusers are rarely caught doing their deeds by the time police get there. Most of them are too smart to leave a trail that is easily traceable back to them. So that leaves us, the survivors, to wait for the inevitable. As a result, we never feel safe, never heal from the violence of the relationship, can't rebuild our self-esteem or sleep well at night because of this unknown. We know that the abuser is going to kill us, we just don't know when or how. The "if" part is a reality.

So what is our recourse? Other than being acutely aware of what is happening and keeping records of it, there is not much we can do. It is a power and control issue and if survivors do not allow the ex partners' craziness to affect their daily lives in such a way that they stop living, then, they are not giving the abuserS control. It is the control the abuser wants and needs.

Now the problem here is two-fold. Firstly, when the survivor refuses to lie down and take it, the abuser tries harder to win. Secondly, those attempts get more violent and hurtful each time and are so covert that the psyche of the survivor is strained. No one tends to believe that these are anything other than weird happenings. It is essential to remember that the survivor has had years of experience with all forms of abuse and can recognise it for what it is in an instant.

When a survivor finally retaliates and does something, the lawyers usually get involved because the abuser cries foul and demands that his lawyer take care of it. Generally there is more money on the abuser's side because if a woman leaves a relationship to save her sanity and her life, she walks away from it all-with her children generally- and allows a lawyer to try to get back some of her possessions and money owed to her. Some women have been incredible, actually planning for at least a year to get out and moving precious belongings and mementos and money out of the house during that time. Most have not.

It is more unfortunate when the abuser is a man with a solid reputation and influence. The ways he can hurt people are astounding because he has his friends on his side. No one would believe that this man actually physically, emotionally or sexually abused his wife. Worse than that, they do not want to know. Most friends are not willing to go beyond a superficial relationship to a deep caring one when in reality, it is a professional association not a personal one that they share. The friends will oust the survivor from the circle and slightly distance themselves from the abuser if they are not 100 % sure of the true reality.

The victim is shoved aside and left to fend for herself. Strange occurrences happen and the lawyers brush them aside because after all they just could be coincidences. The victim knows they are not and is generally not believed. Being stalked is a crime only if the abuser is caught doing it. Most are not. The victim has the best understanding of what is happening to her and is the best resource to talk to when trying to get an assessment of what her life is actually like.

Sadly, the children are often a part of all this since the courts demand that the custodial parent let the abuser know where the children are living, attending school, and their phone number. All these facts leave a trail for the abuser to follow. There is also the needed signed permission slip when the victim decides to take her children across the border and needs the abuser to agree to that. Another trail easily followed. When survivors are forced to give dates and times of their routines to the abusers, there is a strong likelihood that more vindictive actions will be directed towards them. Their homes will be vulnerable to break-ins: reports of suspicious behaviour will be hinted at to border officials thus ensuring that the victim and the family will be searched; gossip, will happen and the reputation of the survivor will be tarnished. The abusers are so good at just letting comments slip that leave others wondering if they were wrong in feeling concern for the survivor.

So I say BRING IT ON! Women are suffering now and will likely suffer again in the near future. There is really nothing that can be done about it. They will either die or they won't and they really don't have a say in the matter. It is a matter of keeping themselves as safe as they can in this world. All I ask is that when it happens, their children are taken yearly to the Silent Witness project so they can be mourned along with other victims of family violence. It is also important that those who are lucky enough to get away, fight hard for others who did not.

A bouquet of flowers to all the lawyers who defend the abusers would be a nice touch. Maybe then, their consciences rather than dollar signs would rule whom they actually defended.

Monica Mirlycourtois

is a writer with a background in Family Violence. She has spent about 15 years doing specialized foster care for abused and hurting children and about 15 years working with women and teens who have experienced sexual, physical and emotional violence. She is the mother of three amazing teenagers and divides her time between family time and responsibilities and writing articles about women and families who have lived through the horror of family violence and survived. She can be contacted at familyviolencesurvivors.com@hotmail.com.



Five Things To Apply If You Want To Seriously Erase Your Debt By Marie Roxas

Millions of Americans are suffering from massive piles of debt. If you're one of them, you've probably been trying to seek ways to erase them all by reading tips from the magazines and the internet. You've also probably used coupons to save on expenses like groceries, clothes and gas, and you've tried to lessen your expenses every month. Those things help, after all, every effort counts, to make your financial life much easier and to help your credit score jump higher. After all, a debt-free life gives you a peace of mind and a chance to buy your dream home or dream car. So, keep doing those things and to top them off, add these tips to your arsenal to ensure your debts are paid off.

1. Consolidate your debts to make repayments much easier.

Debt consolidation means using one large loan to repay all the debts you owe your creditors so you only have one large loan to pay. While it does not change the amount you owe, the difference is in the interest rates and monthly payments, which are lower, making it easier for you to pay your debts.

Debt consolidation is advisable to anyone who has so many high-interest debts to pay; by making one debt to repay every month, it is easier for you to meet your financial obligations.

2. Do not incur another debt to repay another.

Obviously, this will cause another debt and bills to pay, making it more difficult for you. For example, do not open another credit card account in the hopes of paying your other credit cards – this move will not only bring you another load

of debts, but it will not make sense in the long run. the only exception here is probably debt consolidation, in which you only have one lender to pay to.

3. Don't pay just the minimum amount of payments every month.

It will not only take you a long time before you completely pay down all your debts, but it will make you look bad to your lenders. Paying the amount higher than the minimum makes your lenders think you're in good financial shape and you're conscientious to pay your bills – two qualities that make you a good credit risk.

4. Don't fall for payday loans to pay your debts or establish good credit.

In fact, the opposite thing may just happen. By using payday loans or cash advance loans over and over, you are falling into a cycle where you increasing your debts because of their high interest rates, and where your paychecks go to paying these loans. In short, you are increasing your debts instead of lessening them. A more advisable idea is to curb your expenses or talk to your lenders to work on your payment schedule. Payday loans are probably just good for true emergency purposes only.

5. Use loan calculators to estimate how much debt you will pay for loans you'll get.

For almost every type of loans like mortgage loans and car loans, there's got to be a loan calculator. Using this will help you get a clearer picture as to how much interest and monthly rates you will pay for a certain amount of loan you will get. This will help you know how much debt you can realistically pay.

Paying down all your debts may take you months or even years, but picking up good financial habits to curb your expenses, and to pay them off will reward you in the long run.

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Product and Consumer Reviews

Manic over Organic By Wendy Reichental

The other day while perusing a popular Women's magazine, I came across something that cast a cloud on my otherwise sunny lunch hour disposition. There on a page featuring how to make quick and easy healthy snacks, I became transfixed on a recipe for deliciously moist nut bread. I scrolled down and read some of the ingredients; organic sugar, organic shortening, and something I have never come across before Organic cage-free eggs!! Are you kidding me? It's enough to make me go a little non-organic bananas! Suddenly, I got this urge to give this organic stuff a whirl and so I decided to make a list of meal ideas for one week and shop in a natural food store buying only plucked from our raw mother earth products. Cage and roaming free yet still unsuspecting lean chicken here I come! Hey I said I was going organic not vegetarian!

I enter my local health food store with an open mind and wallet and am immediately enamored with my rainforest protected bamboo basket. The store smells lemony fresh, or is that my Clinique "Happy" perfume? No matter, I'm eager to begin. The store appears divided by aisles and aisles of vitamins and supplements of every kind known to man, with names I've never heard of, for ailments or deficiencies I never knew existed. I skip the section with personal skin and hygiene care products; ok wait a minute a safe paraben free long lasting lipstick made with bee-friendly flowers, beeswax, manuka honey and cactus extract! I can't pass this up – my lips are always so chapped and dry! So, I take my time selecting the most perfect color a Sedona rocks soft red. I add this to my basket and move on. I walk past the canned foods as I'm not too excited with the prospect of putting heavy cans in my bamboo carrier and adding more weight to my already growing weight of guilt that I haven't looked for any actual food yet. Time to get serious!

In the frozen section I find an organic pizza with fresh button organic mushrooms, serves 2, \$15.99. One meatless organic plum tomato and soy lasagna, serving 2 - 4, \$39.00. Three free spirited self-sacrificing turkey patties \$9.25. To wash this down we'll need a bottle of the much revered acai berry juice, found only in the deep dark jungles of the Amazon, known as the Incredible Hulk of antioxidants, \$7.99! For dessert I found some gluten free brownies \$11.04, suddenly wishing I was gluten free myself, I decided to wrap up this shopping spree but not before grabbing some organic Bing cherries, \$14.99 and some Fair Trade Coffee noted for being Bird Friendly, Rainforest Alliance Certified, Medium Roast, 1 lb \$35.50. It promises "a luxurious velvety body", which is what I'm gonna have to promise my husband to keep him distracted from the price of these beans and me being certifiable to spend this much on them! And though I enjoy a little texture in my java, I make the decision to forego the highly recommended creamy organic milk suckled straight from happy grazing on pesticide-free pasture Vermont cows!

I empty out my purchases, feeling slightly nauseous, anxiously awaiting the 20something cashier with fabulous looking and naturally still smooth skin to tabulate my items, when she casually mentions "it will be \$158.26 cents!" She then reaches for a soft eco-friendly organic cotton bag which she mentions is mine to keep because I've spent more than \$50!!! Meanwhile, I've gone into an organically induced stupor picturing myself trying to explain to my husband how I spent our grocery money on a few solitary items! I imagine the all natural occurrence of my husband's head erupting into various shades of fiery red! As I leave the store, I realize that while going organic sounds ideal and noble in theory, in order to afford this kind of luxury and lifestyle, you better approach it in moderation or be prepared to have or be making lots of dough and I really don't mean the organic unbleached buckwheat flour kind.



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