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STORY OF THE MONTH - Tips --> Preparing For Retirement!

4 Must-Dos Before Retirement

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The mission of Kidstown International is to help abandoned children living in indigenously-operated Christian orphanages in developing countries so that they may be alleviated of their suffering, have hope for the future, and become productive adults who love the Lord and who will contribute positively to their society.

4 Essential Retirement Checklist Items

1) Brainstorm and Experiment with What's Next

If you're wondering where to start, ask yourself this question: "If I went to the doctor today and he told me that I was going to die tomorrow, what goals went unfulfilled and what did I miss?" George Kinder, who is known as the father of financial life planning, has written books on putting together your life plan that may serve as a good starting point.

If you're married, it is critical that these conversations happen together, preferably before retirement. Retirement can look totally different even for those who have spent a lifetime together. Focus on location and lifestyle.

2) Figure Out Expenses — Now and in the Future

Your location and lifestyle dictate your expenses now and in the future. They often are the driver of your financial success or failure in retirement. If you're getting close to retirement and don't already track your expenses, it's time to start.

3) Increase Your Cash in the Bank

Having a little extra in the bank will provide much-needed emotional security as well as help to reduce what is called sequence risk. In its simplest form, sequence risk is the risk that you will experience negative returns early in retirement as you are starting to spend your savings.

Having extra cash in the bank will allow you to sit out the downturn and wait for things to rebound.

4) Pay Someone to Put Together a Plan

Most of the financial questions you've been asking yourself can be answered through a financial plan. Those questions include the most common: Do I have enough money to call it quits? If you're a do-it-yourselfer, odds are you've been playing with the numbers on an Excel spreadsheet. If so,

it's worthwhile to pay someone for a second opinion.

A financial planner should be able to identify any glaring gaps in your plan as well as put you on the right track. If you're going to run out of money, do you want to know now or 20 years from now?

[\(Source: Kiplinger\)](#)



Notable & Quotable: Alternative, Inefficient Energy

While a barrel's worth of oil weighs just over 300 pounds and can be stored in a \$40 tank, to store the equivalent amount of energy in the kind of batteries used by the Tesla car company requires several tons of batteries that would cost more than several hundred thousand dollars.

Even if engineers were able to double or quadruple battery efficacy, that still would not come near to closing the performance gap between energy from wind and energy from liquid hydrocarbons for transportation.

These stark facts often elicit the response that the alternative technologies will get better with time and scale. Of course they will. But there are no significant scale benefits left, since all the underlying materials (concrete, steel, fiberglass, silicon, and corn) are already in mass production. Nor are there big gains possible in the underlying technologies given the physics we know today.

[\(Source: The Wall Street Journal\)](#)

Median Household Income Hits \$59,039, Rising for 2nd Straight Year

Americans notched solid financial gains in 2016 for a second straight year as household incomes rose, poverty fell and fewer people went without health insurance, signaling an end to the stagnation that lingered since the Great Recession.

The median U.S. household income increased 3.2% to \$59,039, the Census Bureau said Tuesday. That followed a 5.2% increase in 2015, the largest on records dating to 1968. The combined increase over the past two years is the biggest such rise since the 1960s.

"Real median household income has finally completed its nine-year slog of digging out of the ditch," says IHS Markit economist Chris Christopher.

The median, inflation-adjusted income of \$59,000 last year also surpassed the level in 1999 as the highest on record, but Census officials discouraged that comparison because the method for measuring income changed in 2014.

The number of Americans living in poverty fell to 40.6 million from 43.1 million, lowering the poverty rate to 12.7% from 13.5% and placing it just marginally above the prerecession level.

[\(Source: USA Today\)](#)



How to Decide If the iPhone X is Worth \$1K

It's Apple's most expensive phone to date but there may be a limit to what consumers will spend.

The Apple iPhone X is loaded with new features, including facial recognition, wireless charging and an improved camera, which could be important if you are considering an upgrade.

But thanks to the complete redesign, it's also the most expensive phone to date with a \$999 price tag.

About three-quarters of consumers said they don't plan to buy the new iPhone, according to a recent WalletHub survey. Still, Apple fans are likely less price sensitive and may opt for it anyway.

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"Consumers are asked to pay \$1,000 for the new iPhone X at a time when credit card debt is approaching record highs," said Jill Gonzalez, a senior analyst at WalletHub. "Still, installment plans and other financing arrangements will help the iPhone remain as popular as ever, even if, from an economic point of view, it's not the best time to indulge in such expenses."

Patrick Moorhead, an industry analyst at Moor Insights & Strategy, expects virtually everyone interested in the new iPhone X, which rolls out later this year, to use an installment plan.

Best Time to Buy

"The best time to purchase a new iPhone will be over the Black Friday season," according to Michael Bonebright, a consumer analyst at shopping comparison site DealNews.

[\(Source: CNBC\)](#)



6 Ways to Make Smartphones More Humane -- and Less Addictive

39% of millennials say they interact more with their phones than with their loved ones

1) Sleep Mode During Family Time and Other Activities

What if, based on your calendar entries, your phone would know to leave you alone at certain times -- say, during yoga class, dinner with your family, or when you're in a meeting or focusing on an important project?

"It would be really cool if it would synchronize with your calendar and when you were doing something that's not email time or texting time, it would go into some version of sleep mode," said Julie Morgenstern, author of "Never Check Email in the Morning."

Apple is making some moves in this direction. The new iPhone will have a "do not disturb" setting to keep people from texting while driving — one of many potentially life-saving tools found on smartphones.

2) Auto-Reply for Text Messages

Why be expected to immediately respond to texts immediately 24/7?

"For our phones to be more humane, we should have the opportunity to respond that we're not available," said Francine Hermelin, creative director of National Day of Unplugging, an annual event where people put down their devices for a 24-hour "sabbath" from technology.

iPhones don't currently have this auto-reply function, but there's an app called Lil Space that lets Android users do it. Research has shown that it takes more than 20 minutes for our brains to refocus after we've been interrupted by something as seemingly innocuous as

a text message.

3) On-Screen Timer to Tell You Exactly How Long You've Been on Your Phone

Apps like Moment help track phone use, but it might help people use their phones less if there were a built-in timer on every phone screen that continuously told them how many minutes they've frittered away liking Facebook posts about friends' vacations, suggested Morgenstern.

4) Program an Inspirational Message to Yourself

What if, when you were using your phone, a message occasionally popped up that said, "What's the best use of your time right now?" or "Be present now." Little nudges could help us stay focused and productive, Morgenstern said.

It would be similar to this website. Except with these digital pop-up fridge magnet messages of inspiration, you wouldn't have to search for them.

5) Screens That Turn Gray and Matte

One way to make phones less alluring: Make the screen less pretty and shiny. There could be a function like sleep mode that would make the screen resemble a Kindle screen, dull and somewhat lifeless. "If the screen shifted to that, it would not be pulling at you," Morgenstern said.

6) A Tool That Tells You What You Did with Your Phone Today — and What You Didn't Do

How about a function that measures "how my phone is distracting me from my actual intention," Hermelin suggested. "I check my phone to see what time it is and I fall into an email rabbit hole," Hermelin said. If there were a way to see all the times your phone had hijacked your attention, you might be less likely to get distracted by it, she said.

Fitbit watches can already do that to show how many calories you have burned in any given day.

This would be like that, but for your brain.

[\(Source: MarketWatch\)](#)



13 Successful People On The Books That Changed Their Lives

Jeff Bezos

The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

"Bezos has said he learns more from novels than nonfiction," author Brad Stone writes in a biography of Amazon's head honcho. Ishiguro's portrayal of post-World War II England tops "Jeff's Reading List," a list of books widely referenced by Amazon employees, according to Stone.

Sheryl Sandberg

A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L'Engle

In an interview for the New York Times, the Facebook COO and Lean In author says she connected with the "admittedly geeky heroine" of Madeleine L'Engle's fantasy novel at a young age.

Richard Plepler

The Stories of John Cheever, John Cheever

In another Times column, HBO CEO Richard Plepler calls fiction writer John Cheever's collection

of short stories “a jewel” that he frequently rereads.

Mark Zuckerberg

The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg became a strong advocate for criminal justice reform after reading civil rights lawyer Michelle Alexander’s 2010 book on mass incarceration.

Satya Nadella

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Carol Dweck

In a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, he explained that Mindset “is about fixed mind-sets versus growth mind-sets—when you have a growth mind-set, you’re always willing to learn. I started thinking about what was happening in my head and asked whether as a company we have a learning culture. Do we have curiosity?”

John Chambers

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain

In an interview for the Silicon Valley newspaper The Mercury News, Cisco’s recently-departed CEO says Mark Twain’s watershed novel helped him learn to manage dyslexia as a young person.

Carol Berts

“I loved everything Nancy Drew,” Bartz, the former Yahoo CEO told The Mercury News. “She was smart, in control and lived an exciting life — plus she had a sports car.”

Indra Nooyi

The Road to Character, David Brooks

In 2015, Pepsi CEO Nooyi told Fortune that New York Times columnist David Brooks’ account of historical adversity, “sparked a wonderful discussion with my two daughters about why building inner character is just as important as building a career.”

Jeff Weiner

The Art of Happiness, the Dalai Lama

In a Q&A with the Silicon Valley Business Journal, LinkedIn’s Weiner credits the Dalai Lama’s spiritual classic for teaching him “the true definition of compassion.”

Bill Gates

The Better Angels of Our Nature, Steven Pinker

In a May tweet aimed at new graduates, Gates calls Steven Pinker’s bestseller “the most inspiring book” he’s ever read.

Warren Buffett

The Intelligent Investor, Benjamin Graham

The book preaches value investing, or buying stocks when they are really low and holding on for them to go for a long, long time. “I just happened to pick up that book up at a bookstore in Lincoln, Nebraska,” he said in the interview.

Steve Jobs

Autobiography of a Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda

The Apple founder's 1970s spiritual pilgrimage to India is a crucial part of the company's origin story.

Marc Benioff

The Art of War, Sun Tzu

"Since I first read The Art of War more than a dozen years ago, I have applied its concepts to many areas of my life," he writes.

[\(Source: Money Magazine\)](#)

6 Money Issues I Wish I Had Considered When I Joined the Military

After Gabe Lumby was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, the medical bills flooded in. Here's how he got back on his feet financially.

These are the six things I wish I'd known about money and the military from day one.

1) Allotments for Saving

I'd wish I'd known to start making my savings automatic by using allotments.

An allotment is a distribution of a set amount of your pay to the person or account you determine through MyPay.

2) Thrift Savings Plan and Blended Retirement System

I wish I'd known there was a way to start saving for retirement the day I joined.

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is the government version of a 401(k). It allows you to save money for retirement within a tax-advantaged account. If I had started my retirement savings at 18 or even 20 years old, I would have had a great head start.

3) Extra Pay

I wish I'd known to make a plan for what to do when I received extra money.

When you're serving, you may have to go on a temporary duty (TDY) assignment or a deployment that will increase your pay. Promotions will also increase your income.

4) Frivolous Spending

I wish I'd known that I would have nothing to show for all my frivolous spending.

Spending money on experiences can be a rewarding part of life, but you'll want to think critically about which experiences you decide to spend your money on when it could impact your quality of life later on.

5) Free Credit Reports

I wish I'd known what the heck a credit report was and why it was important to my financial future.

Your credit report is your good name. Having negative information on it will lead to lenders charging you more to borrow money or, even worse, not loaning you money at all. Many servicemembers don't realize the significance of on-time payments and not taking on too much debt until they're already in the thick of it.

6) Leave and Earnings Statements

I wish I'd known to check my LES for errors every month.

We all know mistakes happen. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that mistakes happen on servicemembers' leave and earning statements (LES) too. Whatever the mistake, it's compounded when it isn't caught in a timely manner.

If you don't pay attention and you're paid more than you're due, the Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) will take that money back in the next pay period.

[\(Source: USA Today\)](#)