

Money management: Personal debt - are you in over your head?

"Only a small amount a month on our EASY payment plan." If you have succumbed to that seductive phrase only to learn that the payments are easy for them to receive, not for you to make, you may be one of an ever growing group of Americans who take on more debt than they can afford.

But it doesn't have to be that way. According to the North Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants, you can head off credit problems by identifying in advance just how much debt you can afford to take on.

The first step you need to take is determining your "safe" level of debt. And the term debt includes not only credit cards, but all credit obligations except your mortgage. For example, you would include any student loans, car payments, etc.

For most people, the safe level is no more than 20 percent of monthly take-home pay. But even that may be too much. If your annual gross income is \$20,000 or less, or you make \$40,000 a year but have two or more children, you may not be able to handle above 15 percent.

It is important to emphasize that the 20 percent figure is based on your take-home pay—not your gross pay before deductions. Remember that if you are single, a \$20,000 annual gross income after taxes, Social Security and other payroll deductions is probably about \$14,500 or less in take-home pay.

Let's say that you've determined that 20 percent of your take-home pay is \$300 a month and you have only \$150 in payments other than a mortgage. Does that mean you can run out and incur \$150 a month more in debt? Of course not. Owing more than you can pay is the last of many signs that you're in over your head. And answering "yes" to any of the following questions could indicate that you are headed for credit trouble.

Do you spend money with the expectation that you'll be earning more in the future?

Do you borrow money or take cash advances on credit cards to meet current bills?

Do you leave a bigger tip when paying by credit card or collect cash from friends in restaurants then use your credit card to pay for a dinner out?

Do you go on credit card spending sprees even though you know you might not be able to make the monthly payments?

Do you pay your credit bills but let others go for a month or more? Or do you pay both but only pay the minimum amount due on the credit card balances?

Does owning or using a credit card make you feel powerful or important?

Do you have trouble imagining life without credit cards?

The more "yes" answers you have, the more you need to stop and review your spending habits and debt load. If you are already having trouble paying your bills each month, you probably need to take some additional steps.

First, draw up a budget—an austerity budget—to see if you can squeeze more cash free to pay your obligations. If that's not enough, contact your creditors to see if you can work out an agreement: paying interest only for a few months for example. While this may seem intimidating, remember, your creditors want their money and they may be willing to wait if you convince them you want to pay them.

However, there is always the chance that they won't listen to reason. If that is the case, you will probably need help from a credit counselor. There are almost 300 nonprofit credit counseling services that belong to the National Foundation for Consumer Credit and can help you work out a payment plan with your counselors. The nonprofit counselors charge only a nominal fee or, in some cases, no fee. For a directory, write to the NFCC at 8701 Georgia Avenue, Suite 507, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

The credit counselor will help you come up with a budget and negotiate repayment terms with your creditors. Because they often work closely with creditors, they can usually work out a better repayment plan than you could. When the plan is accepted, you write one check to the counselor each month who then parcels it out to the creditors.

Before things get that bad, CPAs advise you to take a close look at your credit levels. If you debt load is approaching 20 percent of your take-home pay, it may be time to cut back on your credit purchases.



Pictured are Ray and Pam Carney Coltraine and their daughter, Rachel Lyndsey of Hertford. They participated recently in a special reunion of Lamaze babies born during the past year at Chowan Hospital. Approximately 35 couples attended. Rachel is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Carney of Hertford and Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood Coltraine of Edenton.

Bookmobile schedule

The following is the Perquimans County Bookmobile Schedule for January through May, 1988.

1st & 3rd Friday: January 15, February 5 & 19, March 4 & 18, April 1 & 15, May 6 & 20.

Cherrix Day Care 9:30; Brian Center 9:45-10:15; Wynne Fork Court 10:30-11:00; Holiday Island Club House 11:15-12:30; Snug Harbor 1:00-2:00; Nebling Drive (Cedar St.); George's Store 2:30-2:45; Kirby Drive 3:15; Gladys Warren 3:30;

Boyce Drive 3:45.

2nd & 4th Friday: January 8 & 22, February 12 & 26, March 11 & 25, April 8 & 22, May 13 & 27.

New Hope 9:45-10:15; White Hat 10:20-10:45; Harrell's Drive 11:00; Woodville Fire Station 11:15-12:00; S. Broglin Drive 12:15; J. Perry's Drive 12:15; A. Whitley 12:30; Chapanoke 12:45-1:15; Truck's Drive 1:30; C.W. Gregory 1:45; Winnie Riddick 2:00; Layden Supermarket 2:15-2:30; M. White 2:45; Wynne Fork 3:15.

School lunch menus

The following is the school menu for the week of January 4-8, 1988.

Monday—breakfast—Pop tart or cereal, fruit or juice, milk.

Lunch—hamburger-bun or steak biscuit, french fries, broccoli spears, managers' choice vegetable, pears, milk.

Tuesday—breakfast—toast-bacon or cereal, fruit or juice, milk.

Lunch—chicken pattie-bun or hot ham & cheese-bun, tri taters, fried okra, succotash, fruit, milk.

Wednesday—breakfast—danish or

cereal, fruit or juice, milk.

Lunch—sausage biscuit or luncheon meat sandwich, french fries, soup, vegetable sticks, fresh apple, milk.

Thursday—breakfast—coffeecake or cereal, fruit or juice, milk.

Lunch—spaghetti or fish portion, potato salad, tossed salad, coleslaw, pineapple, cornbread, milk.

Friday—breakfast—sausage biscuit or cereal, fruit or juice, milk.

Lunch—pizza or submarine, potato wedges, corn on cob, lettuce and tomato, fruit, milk.

Nutrition site menus

The following is the nutrition site menu for the week of January 4-8, 1988.

Monday—baked ham with glazed pineapple, scalloped potatoes, seasoned turnips with roots, cornbread, margarine, orange, fresh, milk.

Tuesday—beef stew in onion gravy, glazed carrots, buttered green peas, buttered noodles, margarine, orange-grapefruit juice, 2 medium chocolate cookies, milk.

Wednesday—chicken baked in undiluted cream of mushroom soup, buttered chopped spinach, coleslaw

with green peppers, whole wheat bread, margarine, chocolate layer cake with chocolate frosting, milk, (optional: hot spiced peaches instead of cake).

Thursday—grilled calves liver, onions, mashed potatoes, seasoned green beans, dinner roll, margarine, (Cong.) strawberries on angel food cake with whipped topping, milk, (optional: fresh orange).

Friday—salisbury steak with gravy, red apple, celery & raisin salad on lettuce, buttered broccoli spears, rice, margarine, grapefruit-orange sections, milk.

Teen health tips

TOUGH TIMES FOR TEENS

By Dr. James "Red" Duke Jr. Prominent Physician

Teens haven't changed, times have. Pressures of the '80s, such as divorce, fierce peer competition and limited family time, make it harder for teens to mature into healthy adults. Fortunately, however, these pressures can be counter-balanced with some simple "dos and don'ts":

- Do encourage life experience as much as academic success. Allow teens to broaden their skills beyond an ability to answer test questions, through community clubs and stimulating part-time jobs.

- Do welcome questions. In today's society, people are embarrassed about appearing naive. Teens need a place to ask questions without intimidation. Listen carefully and take questions seriously.

- Do set the rules. One thing that helps keep anyone out of trouble is a known set of standards and reactions. To make sure you're both communicating clearly, listen to your teen's point of view, repeat it to make sure you understand, then based on your discussion set new ground rules to follow.

- Do watch what they eat. With commercial role models demanding great looks, teens are concerned about their changing bodies more than ever. Establish good eating habits by serving and eating low-fat nutritious meals.

- Do accept hard truths. Honesty on both sides is essential. Many kids won't be honest if they think you won't like the truth. Accept their decisions instead of judging them. Your teen will tell you



Dr. Duke

more and begin to look for more guidance.

- Don't underestimate social traumas. Wanting "to-be-liked" is a natural emotion for teens. Take time to discuss social problems.

- Don't overdo. Pressures from schools and friends can wear teens out. If they want to sit at home and rest, let them. They need quiet times to be by themselves and grow. And besides, they've probably earned the break.

For more information on this and other ideas for healthy living, tune-in to BODYWATCH, the PBS-TV series funded by The NutraSweet Company, that brings you health and fitness ideas you can live with. A viewers' guide to the series is available through: The NutraSweet Center (BWII) P.O. Box C1115, Skokie, IL 600076. For further details, check the current issue of American Health Magazine and your local TV listings for show times in your area.

Central Carolina motor vehicle office to open

RALIEGH—One of Governor James G. Martin's chief goals—providing enhanced state government services and greater responsiveness to the needs of citizens and business—will become a reality January 4. At the same time, the governor will also achieve a second important goal, which is improved efficiency and reduced costs for state government.

On that day, commercial motor carriers planning to renew their licenses and operating and fuel use tax permits will have the advantage of completing their transactions at a central North Carolina office, rather than having to visit several widely dispersed state and federal agencies.

William S. Hiatt, North Carolina Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, announced that the new "one-stop shopping" service is an experimental program being tested for the first time in 1988; in an effort to enhance convenience to truckers and bus operators. The period from January 4 to February 15 was selected for the experimental program, Hiatt said, because it is the peak permit and license renewal season.

Under the cooperation state-federal arrangement, representatives of the Division of Motor Vehicles, Fuels Use Tax Division of the North Carolina Department of Revenue Service, North Carolina Utilities Commission and Internal Revenue Service will be headquartered together in DMV facilities on New Bern Avenue, Raleigh, during the six-week period. This central one-stop office will be equipped to provide all of the renewal services required by commercial vehicle operators.

Divisions of Motor Vehicles representatives who will be assigned to the office include officials of the Registration Section, Motor Carrier Safety Unit of the Enforcement Section, and the International Registration Plan Section.

Hiatt said that one-stop shopping is a concept encouraged nationwide by the National Governors' Association to promote uniformity among the states.

Undoubtedly, this will afford an added convenience for commercial vehicle operators," the commissioner added, "but the agencies have better working relations among agencies, and fostering voluntary compliance by motor carriers with permit and license regulations."

Hiatt, who serves on a five-member national committee which is studying one-stop shopping for the Federal Highway Administration, pointed out that the North Carolina experience will be advantageous in helping other states establish a permanent central office. The commissioner's appointment to the committee was announced this week by the National Governors' Association.

The North Carolina one-stop shopping office will be located on the first floor of DMV's main building. Telephone inquiries will be answered at the office beginning January 4. The telephone number is (919) 733-0671.

"North Carolina is pleased to become one of the first states in America to provide one-stop shopping for commercial motor carriers, and we are dedicated to becoming a national model," Hiatt said. "We are confident that the experiment will be a success, and we anticipate expansion of the service in the future."

IRS reviews new tax laws for legal aliens

IRS REVIEWS TAX OBLIGATIONS OF LEGALIZED ALIENS

The Internal Revenue Service has issued a new publication to inform legalized aliens about their tax obligations. Any alien having income from sources in the United States, must pay U.S. taxes. This applies whether the alien is a legal U.S. resident or an alien undergoing legalization.

The Publication 927, "Tax Obligations of Legalized Aliens," is now available from the Internal Revenue Service. It describes the tax rules that apply to aliens undergoing legalization of their residence status. The text is written in both English and Spanish.

The publication is available through the Immigration and Naturalization Service and also through the IRS by calling 1-800-424-3677.

Commission approves funding for project

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission in its regular meeting approved its first ever small grants program which will provide \$50,000 from the Nongame Wildlife Fund to support research, management and education projects for nongame wildlife.

These funds come from the income tax refund checkoff. Under this program, members of the Commission's Nongame Advisory Committee would examine requests for grant money from individuals, organizations or agencies working on nongame wildlife-related projects. Nongame wildlife includes all species of animals which are not hunted, fished or trapped.

"Our Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program is growing, thanks to the outstanding support of North Carolinians who contribute through the income tax checkoff," said Deborah Paul, manager of the Commission's Nongame Section. "We are very pleased to now have funding available to support much-needed projects conducted by graduate, conservation groups and others involved in nongame work."

The grants, which may range from \$500 to \$5,000, will be awarded by the advisory committee based on the quality of the project and its benefits to North Carolina wildlife and citizens. The project must be accomplished in North Carolina.

"There are some small mammals in high mountain peaks such as moles and shrews that we know almost nothing about," said Dr. Jim Parnell, who chairs the Commission's Nongame Wildlife Advisory

Committee. "We have a mammalogist at the University of North Carolina campus in Wilmington who would be eager to take a group of students to the mountains for two or three days to study these mammals."

"Then there's the piping plover—a bird we know little about. We may have a graduate student looking at the bird on our beaches. We may have Boy Scout groups that have the energy for educational or management projects, but not the materials. We could provide money for those materials through the Small Grants Program."

Through the projects funded by the grants program, the Commission itself could increase its base of information about many of North Carolina's animals.

All grants will be made for a single year. Proposals may be made for multi-year projects, but funding beyond the first year will depend on the availability of funds, progress during the first year and how the project would contribute to the advisory committee's goals.

"We will invite proposals for grants and then decide what should be awarded based on the merits of those proposals," Dr. Parnell said. "We'll look for quality projects. They could come from groups or agencies including local conservation groups, 4-H groups, school groups, or graduate students. We believe it will increase the visibility of our nongame program."

"A little amount of money can generate a lot of interest," he said.

Tips for responsible holiday party planning

Raleigh—If you're planning to entertain friends on New Year's Eve, North Carolina Commissioner of Motor Vehicles William S. Hiatt offers a few tips for responsible party planning.

"The purpose of a party is to celebrate friendship, relax and have fun," Hiatt said. "All too often, though, someone drinks too much. And when this happens you certainly don't want them behind the wheel of a car."

The best approach is to prevent drunkenness, Hiatt advised. "We have made alcohol such a staple at parties that many guests are embarrassed to ask for non-alcoholic drinks. You can quietly avoid this situation by making an inviting, non-alcoholic punch and by icing down soft drinks."

Here are some other imaginative party ideas and subtle ways for you to control consumption without offending guests:

1. Serve all drinks, alcoholic and non, in the same kind of glass so the non-drinkers don't have to be singled out;
2. Serve high-protein foods, both

before and during alcohol consumption. Food has no power to sober anyone up, but it will slow the rate of bloodstream absorption;

3. If there's no bartender, set out jiggers to encourage measuring when guests are mixing their own drinks;

4. Provide music, dancing, charades, food service. Anything that keeps your guests from just sitting around and drinking will help promote sobriety; and finally

5. If you have any doubts about guests' ability to drive, offer an alternative: Let them curl up on the sofa and stay overnight, call a taxi, or get someone who has not been drinking to take them home.

"Alcohol is cunning, powerful and dangerous," Hiatt said. "There's no set rule as to how much an individual can consume without becoming impaired. This varies from person to person. But the odds of having an accident increase with each drink."

Last year in North Carolina, 707 people were killed and nearly 20,000 were injured as a direct result of alcohol-related traffic accidents, Hiatt reported.

NOTICE
TOWN OF WINFALL
GARBAGE COLLECTION
DECEMBER 31, THURSDAY MORNING
TOWN OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED JAN. 1

"Please, my little girl needs blood."

Imagine if you had to ask for blood to save the life of someone you love. Next time the American Red Cross asks, give blood, please.

GIVE BLOOD, PLEASE 

NOTICE

The filing period for candidates that have to file in Perquimans County May Primary commences at 12:00 Noon, January 4, 1988 and closes at 12:00 Noon February 1, 1988.



INSIGHT INTO EYESIGHT

Dr. A.F. Downum
OPTOMETRIST

BIFOCALS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

If you're a young adult whose vision isn't as good as you would like it to be, especially when looking at objects close up or at a distance, you may be able to benefit from wearing glasses or contacts with bifocal lenses.

In examining your eyes, your eye doctor will perform a series of tests to find out how good your near vision is. This is the vision you use for reading or working with figures and other activities in which it is important to see close-up objects clearly. If your near vision needs correcting, a prescription will be made for the lower portion of your lens. Tests will then be made to see how accurate or clear your distance vision is. If that should need correcting, a separate prescription will be made for the upper portion of your lens.

Whatever your vision problems may be, let your eye doctor prescribe the corrections you need to see well and comfortably again, no matter where you happen to be looking.

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