**4**

**Hello, this is Helen Jones and Cynthia White coming to you today with a Podcast on small steps to Health and Wealth.**

**There are many similarities in Health and Wealth, which people are not aware.**

Health and wealth are both important resources for living a happy and successful life. People in poor health often die young and spend thousands of dollars (that could have been invested) on health care costs. On the other hand, those who practice recommended health behaviors are more likely to exceed average life expectancy and need a large nest egg to insure that they do not outlive their assets.

Health and personal finances are both closely associated with happiness.

Research data indicate that four factors strongly predict happiness and well-being in most cultures: health, economic status, employment, and family relationships. Studies indicate that people are happier when they are healthy, employed, married or in a long-term committed relationship, and financially secure.

Today we are going to continue with the strategies to improve your Health and Wealth. These steps help you take charge of your future. We suggest adopting no more than three or four strategies and to coordinate those that are related.

The next strategy to consider is “Commit To Making a Change”

Most people make improvements to their health and finances by changing themselves without the assistance of professionals or 12-step support groups. According to a leading theory about personal behavior change, improvements, such as losing weight and saving money, take place in defined stages over a period of time. This theory, called the Transtheoretical Model of Change, has been applied to a variety of health-related behaviors including weight control and addictions (e.g., smoking).

According to the Transtheoretical Model, there are five major stages of change. At the pre-contemplation stage, people may not even be aware that a problem (e.g., high debt load and risk for diabetes) exists or that a change should be made in their lives. At the contemplation stage, they gain knowledge about alternative behaviors and begin to understand ways to change (e.g., reduce spending and increase physical activity). At the preparation stage, people seriously plan to make changes and gain required skills (e.g., taking a personal finance course or visiting the www.nutrition.gov website). At the action stage, they “take the plunge” and actually change a behavior. In the maintenance stage, people work to sustain their change and reap the rewards of their efforts (e.g., decreased debt balance and improved blood-glucose levels).

Commitment takes place during the preparation stage of change. Here people acknowledge that “if it is to be, it’s up to me” and begin to develop a plan of action. Studies have found that “plans to change” can predict actual changes. An example of a statement of commitment to change is “I will save $25 per week in a 401(k).” Another is “I will take two 600-mg calcium tablets with meals daily.” As people prepare to change their behaviors, they often seek “how to” information and advice. Common activities performed during the preparation stage of change are: enrolling in a class, consulting a counselor, buying a self-help book, and paying increased attention to a behavior-change issue (e.g., preventing diabetes).

Sometimes people are able to simply “will” a behavior change. When asked later how they succeeded in changing, they reply, “I just decided to do it.” Perhaps they drew a mental “line in the sand” at some point (e.g., weighing 180 pounds) and dared not cross it. Or maybe they became aware of the dangers of an unhealthy practice and told themselves “Something has to change” or “I’ve got to do something about this” or “I’m just not going to do this anymore.” More commonly, however, successful behavior change requires a variety of self-help strategies and/or a strong support system.

As you commit to take action to improve your health and finances, determine what behavior(s) you are changing, the pros and cons of making changes, and how you intend to change your behavior and address obstacles along the way.

A few action steps would be:

Health

* Identify the stage of change you are in with respect to a health behavior that you want to change.
* Write a statement of commitment to change a health behavior using the words “I will.”
* Identify the primary factors that motivate you to make health changes (e.g., fitting into tight jeans).
* Turn a negative behavior into a positive (e.g., I’ll cut back on sweets and eat fresh fruit instead).

Wealth

* Identify the stage of change you are in with respect to a financial behavior that you want to change.
* Write a statement of commitment to change a financial behavior using the words “I will.”
* Identify the primary factors that motivate you to make financial changes (e.g., fear of living in poverty).
* Turn a negative behavior into a positive (e.g., I’ll cut back on lottery tickets and save the money)

The next strategy is

“Defy Someone or Defy the Odds”

Remember when you were a small child and your parents told you not to do something? What did you often do? You turned around and did it anyway. Acts of defiance are how preschoolers begin to assert themselves. It is their way of rebelling against parental restrictions and attempting to manipulate people. Defiant children generally perceive several “payoffs” to their behavior including increased power and control over others and the satisfaction that comes with successfully “breaking the rules.”

Acts of defiance can also be used in a positive way to improve your health and/or increase your wealth. One way is to simply defy someone and make a recommended behavior change. If others say you’ll never be able to do something (e.g., lose weight, quit smoking, exercise, repay debt, save money), defy them and take the necessary action to prove them wrong. For added motivation, make a bet with someone (e.g., a friend or sibling) with a desired reward and a time deadline. For example, “I bet you [a certain dollar amount] or [tickets to a play] that I’ll be able to [describe behavior change] by [date].” Better still, challenge the other party to a competition and compare your respective progress. Tap into the same urges to rebel and compete that you once had as a child. Feel the smugness that comes with proving other people wrong as you take small steps toward improved health and finances.

There are many similarities between expert recommendations to challenge a defiant child and using defiance to improve a health and/or financial behavior. Step one is to decide which current behavior you want to change and the preferred behavior you eventually want to see. Step two is to determine the smallest sign of change. Step three is to “catch someone doing something good” (i.e., making a positive change) and acknowledge it as an incentive to continue making progress.

What if you don’t have anyone to defy? Not to worry. You can still employ this behavior-change strategy by “defying the odds” and not allowing yourself to “become a statistic” with regard to issues like diabetes, obesity, overspending, and bankruptcy. Not sure where to get started? Make plans to use a bet or a dare or a competition with someone as an incentive to change a health or personal finance behavior. Pick a health statistic and a wealth statistic that you would like to defy and describe your action plan.

**Health Statistics to Defy**

* In 2010, 34% of adults were obese as were 17% (or 12.5 million) of children between ages 2 and 19 according to the Center for Disease Control. The number of states with an obesity prevalence of 30% or more has increased to 12 states in 2010. (http:// [www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/overwt.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/overwt.htm))
* Two thirds of Americans are overweight (BMI between 25 and 29.9), obese (BMI between 30 and 39.9), or extremely obese (BMI of 40 and above).
* In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at $147 billion; the medical costs paid by third-party payors for people who are obese were $1,429 higher than those of normal weight.
* American adult caloric intake has risen from 1,854 to 2,002 calories per day over the past 20 years. This 148-calorie-per-day increase equals a weight gain of 15 pounds per year.
* Cigarette smoking, followed by poor diet and physical inactivity, are the leading preventable causes of death in America.
* Some 25.8 million Americans have diabetes and 79 million have pre-diabetes, meaning their blood-sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet at the level that qualifies for a diabetes diagnosis.
* More than 60% of American adults do not get the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity a day and 25% aren’t physically active at all.
* In a 2004 study, for every 30 minutes spent commuting, workers had a 3% higher chance of becoming obese compared with workers who spent less time driving

**Wealth Statistics to Defy**

* The average U.S. household with credit card debt carries a balance of about $15,000.
* About 70% of Americans are living “paycheck-topaycheck” and have no money left over after paying basic monthly expenses.
* The number of U.S.household bankruptcy filings soared to about 1.6 million in 20014.
* About half of all bankruptcies in 2001 were triggered by illness or medical debts.
* Average American households are saving only about 1% of their disposable personal income.
* Only three in ten U.S. household meet the recommended guideline of holding at least three months expenses in cash assets for emergencies.
* The median net worth (assets minus debts) of all households in 2004 was $93,100.
* About 15% of U.S. workers experience financial distress that affects their workplace productivity.
* One-quarter of U.S. households are considered wealth-poor. They have net assets under $10,000 and are a layoff or emergency expenditure away from financial disaster.

The following quote (unknown author) makes a strong statement about the “power of defiance”.

“If you want to see something done, just tell some human beings it can’t be done. Make it known that it’s impossible to fly to the moon, or run a hundred metres in nine seconds, or solve Fermat’s Last Theorem. Remind the world that no one has ever hit sixty-two home runs in a season, stuffed eighteen people into a Volkswagon Bug, Set half the world free, or cloned a sheep. Dangle the undoable in front of the world. Then consider it done.”

Some questions that you can ask:

What is the current behavior that you want to change for your Health and Wealth goal?

What is the preferred behavior that you want to practice for your Health and Wealth goal?

Whom do you want to defy for your Health and Wealth goal?

Why do you want to defy this person for your Health and Wealth goal?

How will you defy this person for your Health and Wealth goal?

What statistics do you want to defy for your Health and Wealth goal?

How will you defy this statistic for your Health and Wealth goal?

Some action steps would be:

**Health**

* Pick someone to defy or compete with as an incentive to change a health behavior.
* Keep imagining how good it will feel to prove to someone that you can change.
* Pick a troubling health statistic and take action to defy it.

**Wealth**

* Pick someone to defy or compete with as an incentive to change a financial behavior.
* Keep imagining how good it will feel to prove to someone that you can change.
* Pick a troubling financial statistic and take action to defy it.

Those are just a couple strategies for your journey of behavior changes.

Well this completes our series of podcasts leading you to a track of improved health and wealth. We have provided you with multiple similarities and many strategies to put you on the right track.

As always, thanks so much for tuning in and remember:

“Don’t let your past dictate who you are…let it be a part of who you become.”

Thanks for listening in on our Small Steps to Health and Wealth.