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Consumer Debt Gnaws at the Fabric of Freedom and Self-Worth

Debt is back, big time. The tightening that occurred after the crash of 2008 has been replaced by **debt approaching \$1 trillion dollars**. And it shows no signs of abating.

Student loans and credit cards may be good for the issuers who capture more revenue through high interest loans and late fees but they are creating a pool of **consumers sinking deeper and deeper into debt**.

Credit card debt has already surpassed the pre-2008 crash levels, per WalletHub. Thirty-four billion dollars was added to credit cards in the last quarter of 2016 alone WalletHub found. To add to that increase, in the same period there was a record **low payback of debt**.

In my conversations with Millennials, I hear a range of concern about their debt. Some do all they can to avoid debt by delaying college until they can afford to pay for it or work for companies that will pay for their college education. I know one Millennial who has \$300,000 in student loans. She told me that it is the price she has had to pay to attain her law degree. Although the debt does add stress to her life, she does not want it to confine her life to just working. She figures she will have this debt all her life and hopes that the government will one day forgive it.

What have we done, where we have created a society saddled with debt as a way of life? Is this a sustainable model? I do not think so. It may seem to work for a generation but **it is not a sustainable model for financial strength**. Ongoing and mounting debt gnaws at the edges of the fabric of freedom, independence and self-worth. Debt is a burden. It may not direct all our actions but it directs our thoughts on how we think of ourselves.

Email me at bhaj@focusandsustain.com to tell me what you think about and how you deal with debt in your own life. I would love to hear your thoughts on this mighty subject.

Life is so much brighter when we focus on what truly matters...



We have heard the phrase *“live each day like it’s your last”*. We updated it to *“live each day like it’s your best”*.



This Month’s Offer:

For those of you in the **Money Focus** programs, we will provide an **extra 20 minute call** with Bhaj for a question or concern you might have about taking control of your money habits.

This is in addition to your regular April call with Bhaj

Contact grace@focusandsustain.com to take advantage of this exclusive offer.

This offer ends on April 25, 2017

April’s Food for Thought

- **Next time you buy bread, be sure to read the ingredients...carefully.** If wheat is on your “do not eat” list and now you have a new option from which to make your bread. You can thank to engineering students from the Federal University of Rio Grande, in Brazil, as they have developed a flour **with 40% more protein** than traditional wheat flour. This flour contains many essential amino acids and lipids. Oh yes, **this flour is made from cockroaches**. No, not the ones you see scurrying across the room as you turn on the light in your vacation room, it is from a special species, grown by a specialized breeder, feeding exclusively on fruits and vegetables. Bon appetit!
- Commercial pilots see things we, mere passengers, do not see. For instance, a JAL jumbo cargo jet, captained by Kenji Terauchi saw **three unidentified objects** on November 16, 1986, near Anchorage Alaska. The lights on the objects seemed to be yellow, amber and green and veered within 1000 feet in front of the plane. The **US military radar picked up two of the objects but did not intervene as the objects disappeared quickly**. The same or a similar object was reported by a US Air Force jet in 1986. This time the UFO came within 40 feet of the plane. Hmm, are there visitors among us?
- If you have plans to go to Italy you might take a side trip to Caprara and visit Riccardo Bertani. As a child he worked in the fields but left to pursue his passions in reading and learning languages. Because his father had Russian tomes with authors like Tolstoy on the shelves, Riccardo read those with the help of an Italian/Russian translator. This passion led him to translate books he found in countries he traveled through. To date, **this 86 year-old has translated and documented from over 100 extinct and rare languages from around the world.**

“You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have”

Bob Marley

Life Matters

Quick Tips



Money Focus

Recently, Warren Buffet described a few of his money tips:

- He said to **invest in things you know, otherwise you are just gambling**. As you think about investing with your money, think about the industries you follow or enjoy, then research the strengths of that company. Are they leaders in product, vision and deliverables? For your first 3 picks invest in them with fake dollars or 10% of what you would ordinarily invest and watch to see how they do and how you react to how they do.
- **Get out of debt so all your money can be yours** rather than yours and someone else's. Debt is a seductive enterprise. If you go into debt, set debt ceilings, debt pay off dates and debt pay off schedules. Stick to them!

Life Focus

Ask yourself : “Why do I do this? What purpose does this serve? Does this align with my core values”

When you can ask yourself these questions , you will find that you can distinguish your emotional response to things from the value that thing has in your life.

For example, the other day I had a few minutes before I had to manage a stage at a music festival so I went into a nearby clothing store and found a couple of items I liked. My first impulse was to put them on my credit card and take them home. But I stopped myself by asking: “Why? What purpose does purchasing these items serve?” The first response that came back was: “Because I like them and because they are unique.” “Really?” I then asked myself. I discovered that I was merely marking time rather than buying something I needed/wanted. I walked out. **Three days later, I am happy that I did not purchase these items.** They did not fulfil my bigger purpose.

Take yourself through this exercise. Tell me what you experience.



Legacy Focus

Philanthropy is a great way to bring family members together not merely as another activity but as a **way to connect inter-generationally**. It serves as a way to coalesce the common purpose of the family and it provides a **platform to model leadership, team work, strategic thinking and organization**.

Philanthropy, when used as a group initiative, **can unite family members** in a way that is removed from the tension surrounding business concerns.

Life Matters



N.Cog Nito in the Desert

I was in the desert recently and what a time I had. First of all, the **BNP Paribas Tennis Tournament at Indian Wells was fantastic**. I had a mission while I was there, to get Bhaj's Roger Federer hat, the one she has had since 2003, signed by Mr. Federer. He would not oblige my request. Even standing out in the signature area for 3 hours resulted in "nada". He walked by the screaming fans wanting his autograph and did not stop.

Fortunately that did not dampen the fun I had on that trip. **I hiked the San Jacinto mountains and saw flowers that, I was told, had not bloomed since 2005**. They were having a beautiful desert spring thanks to the winter rains. As I was staying in the foothills of the mountain range, **I could see the trail the rains had left as they cascaded down the mountain** in a recent deluge. On my first early morning hike, I happened to look down on the path, and there, in front of me about three feet, was **a snake, slowly slithering** across the path. I looked closer and recognized, from the markings on its tail, that this was a **rattler**. I backed up and heard a voice behind me tell me that the snakes were starting to come out from their winter hibernation. I politely greeted the rattler, and noticed that I went down the hill a little faster and with more attention to the path than before the rattler showed up. Ah yes, the desert...what a time I had!