One of the things that is sometimes hard to do is to take a look at our habits that may cause leaks in our spending. It could be simple things like what you choose to snack on, to not using memberships you have paid for, to guzzling extra gas in your car by the way you drive.

With weather moving towards longer daylight and better road conditions, you may choose to spend more time on the road. Here are some small changes that can make a big difference when it comes to saving money at the gas pump:

- **Observe the speed limit.** I know we are all in ‘such a hurry’, but for each 5 mph you drive above 60mph, it’s like paying about 21 cents more per gallon. Yikes!!! You wouldn’t knowingly choose to fill up at a station whose price was that far above the others, but by not slowing down that’s what you are doing.

- **Replace air filters regularly.** Clogged air filters can reduce mileage as much as 10%.

- **Use the proper grade of gas and motor oil.** Be sure to check the Owner’s Manual…the wrong oil can lower mileage. Also, using a higher octane gas than your car needs may also be wasting money.

- **Use cruise control and overdrive gears.** Using these features when appropriate can assist in fuel economy, which translates to money in your pocket.

- **Drive sensibly.** By anticipating traffic flow and ‘jackrabbit starts’ and constant breaking you’ll improve your mileage up to about 5%.

- **Beware of ‘gas saving’ devices in ad claims.** The EPA tested over 100 of these and found that very few provide benefits…so select very carefully, check with a trusted mechanic, and buyer beware.

With the price of gas well over $2/gallon, combined with the amount of driving we seem to do, giving consideration to these pointers could mean some serious cash in your pocket over the course of a year. It all adds up!!

~Teresa Hunsaker

Source: US Dept. of Energy
7 Tips for a Mindful Marriage

We live in a fast-paced world, and, if we aren’t careful, life can slip by without fully enjoying the people and things we love most. Being mindful, or maintaining an awareness of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surroundings, can help us to be more mentally, emotionally and physically present, and more fully enjoy those things, and people, that matter most to us. Consider these seven tips to increasing mindfulness in your relationship with your significant other.

1. Practice personal mindfulness.
Practicing personal mindfulness can help to create a stronger relationship with your sweetheart. Quieting the excess chatter in your mind will help to steady your emotions and lower your physical and mental stress levels, potentially making you less reactive to your partner’s actions or words. It can also help you to focus on the small, everyday moments with your loved one, such as being fully present when you hug or kiss them.

2. Prioritize time with your spouse.
In order for us to connect and be mindful of our partner we need to have time together. Make your spouse a priority and give them your undivided attention, even if it is for ten minutes every day to check in with them about their day. No TV. No phones. No books. Just each other.

3. Continually learn about each other.
Take time to ask open-ended questions so you can know about what is really going on in their world. The more mindful you are of each other’s hopes, dreams and challenges the more of a support you can be to each other.

4. Show affection.
Let your partner know that you are mindful of them through showing your love daily through affection. Hold hands, give a lingering full-body hug, or five-second kiss.

5. Play together.
Have fun together and try new things. Show that you are mindful of your partner by trying things that he/she enjoys doing.

6. Express appreciation and compliments.
Show your partner that you are aware of them by sharing genuine compliments and words of appreciation daily.

7. Service.
Show your partner that you are mindful of them through helping to ease their load through small acts of service. Even little things like getting up with the kids, making dinner, or doing a chore you normally don’t do can make a huge difference.

~Naomi Brower

References:

Someone who really loves you sees what a mess you can be, how moody you can get, how hard you are to handle, but still wants you.
Source: Felix H.
Family and Consumer Science Events

**Home Buyer Education Classes**
USU Extension Service
1181 No. Fairgrounds Dr., Ogden

- Saturday, April 7, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 2, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, August 4, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, October 13, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, December 1, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

These classes help prepare people for the home buying process. The curriculum covers mortgage options, finances, housing choices, etc. Cost is $25 per household for certificate and free for education only. Call 801-399-8207 to register.

**Family Finance Camp**
Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnership
3159 Grant Avenue, Ogden

*April 12, 19 & 26
Cost: FREE*

This is a free 3 part class for youth 5-18 (we have separate classes for the age groups, and for adults). We serve a light dinner and have lots of fun learning about how to work together on family money matters. Call 801-399-8207 to register or for more information.

**Master Food Preserver Course**

*June 5, 6, 7, 18, 19 & 20
8:00 am - 2:00 pm.
Cost: $130/person*

Here it is, an in-depth series on food preservation! This *Master Food Preserver Course* is intended to help you feel very confident in all areas of food preservation…pressure canning, water bath canning, dehydrating, and freezing. We will study the food science behind why we do what we do in preserving food, for optimum food safety.

You will learn why methods have changed, why “grandma’s recipe” isn’t safe anymore, and how to master the art of food preservation to assist you in taking advantage of produce to save on your grocery dollar.

The course consists of six different days with both lectures and labs. No previous experience is required to take this course. It is designed for young and not so young, those who have canned for years, and those who are just starting out. It is so much fun!!! Plus, we get to taste samples and even take a little home. The course is also designed to provide certification for those interested in being a Master Food Preserver volunteer. At this level of completion you will be able to take and answer canning calls during canning season, give demonstrations to groups in the community, and test pressure canning lids for accuracy. In order to receive certification, participants will be required to attend all classes and take an exam..

**COST:** $130 full course or $25 per day for full days and $12 for half days. Full cost covers: canning guide book, binder, training material, food supplies, apron, and lots of fun. You can attend just one day offerings, and cost for that day covers food and recipes for that day.

**LOCATION:** Mt. Ogden Junior High FACS kitchen, 3260 Harrison Blvd., Ogden, UT 84403

**REGISTRATION:** Seating is limited. Register by calling 801-399-8207.
Date Nights...

Escape Together Date Night
Friday, April 13, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Getout Games, Salt Lake City
$45 per couple

Practice your problem solving skills as you work as a team to solve a mystery and escape before you run out of time! Cost includes activities, refreshments, prizes, and fun!

Growing Your Relationship Date Night
Friday, April 27, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Ogden Botanical Gardens, Ogden
$25 per couple

Come learn how to make your marriage bloom as you learn container gardening tips and techniques that you can use to create your own container garden to take home and enjoy. Cost includes one container garden per couple, refreshments, prizes, and fun!

Touch of Love Massage Date Night
Friday, May 4, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
USU Kaysville Education Center, Room 133/135, Kaysville
$15 per couple

Bond with your partner through the love language of “touch” as you learn and practice basic (over-clothing) massage techniques on your sweetheart. Space is limited; reserve your spot today!

Spice Blends

Mediterranean Blend
½ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon cayenne
½ teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon oregano
½ teaspoon cumin
½ teaspoon thyme
1 teaspoon coriander

Use on vegetables, in soups or on meats.

Southern Blend
¼ cup paprika
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoon oregano
½ teaspoon cayenne

Uses 1 ½ - 2 teaspoon to coat 1 lb. of chicken, beef or fish.

Salt Shaker Blend
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 ½ teaspoon basil
1 ½ teaspoon dry mustard
½ teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon ground celery seed
½ teaspoon paprika

Use in place of salt on vegetables, and meats.

To register for classes go to upcoming events at relationships.usu.edu
Historically spices and herbs have been used as medicine, for food preservation and for flavor. Many cultures such as ancient Egypt, China, Greece and Rome record the use of spices and herbs such as, garlic, cumin, thyme, ginger, and cloves. In Europe during the middle ages spices were imported and were very expensive. A 1393 A.D German record states that a pound of nutmeg was worth 7 fat oxen! Today we can find a huge variety of spices and herbs in our grocery stores at much more affordable prices.

Spices are defined as the root, bark or seed of a plant. Examples are cinnamon, nutmeg and cumin. Herbs are the leaves such as oregano and basil.

To keep your spices and herbs fresh store them in a tightly capped container away from heat, light and moisture. Generally, ground spices will last 2-3 years and herbs 1-3 years. To help them last longer by reducing the moisture content, don’t sprinkle over a steaming pot, use a dry spoon to add them to your dish.

Many of us are stuck in a rut, salt, pepper, onions and garlic. Wake up your taste buds and take yourself on a trip around the world. For example:

- Mexico - use cumin, oregano, chili powder, cilantro and garlic.
- Italy - use basil, oregano, parsley and garlic.
- Asia - use soy sauce, ginger, garlic, chilies and turmeric.

An added benefit of using more spices and herbs to pump up the flavor of your food is that you can reduce the amount of salt and fat you use.

Below, is a delicious soup that will take you to the plains of Africa, and spice blends to take you to the beaches of the Mediterranean and to the great American south. Enjoy!!

**African Bean Soup**

½ cup water  
3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce  
1 onion, sliced  
2 small sweet potatoes or yams, peeled and diced, about 2 cups  
1 large carrot, thinly sliced  
1 celery stalk, thinly sliced  
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced  
1 (15 oz.) can crushed tomatoes  
4 cups vegetable broth, or chicken broth  
1 (15 oz.) can garbanzo beans  
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro  
3 tablespoons peanut butter  
1 - 2 teaspoons curry powder  
4 cups cooked brown rice

Heat water and soy sauce in a large pot. Add onion and cook over high heat, stirring often, until onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients except for rice. Stir to mix, then cover and simmer until vegetables are tender when pierced with a fork, about 15-20 minutes. To serve, place ½ cup cooked rice in a bowl and top it with a generous ladle of soup. Yield: 8 servings

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A Ground Beef Reminder

As the weather starts to warm up, and the gas grill is begging for some use, here are some reminders when selecting and cooking ground beef.

✓ Bacteria can be present in any ground beef (or any other raw meats...poultry, fish, eggs). Some bacteria may cause food to spoil, but others, like Salmonella, campylobacter, E.coli, and listeria, can cause you to become ill.
✓ At the store, be sure to choose a package that is not torn and that feels quite cold. Place meat container in another plastic bag to keep juices from possibly dripping on other foods.
✓ Get perishables home quickly and refrigerate or freeze.
✓ When handling raw ground beef, don’t let the juices contaminate any foods that won’t be cooked.
✓ Wash cutting mats/boards well, and sanitize with a mild bleach solution...1 TBS bleach to 1 quart water.
✓ Wash your hands well with soap and hot water before and after handling ground beef.
✓ When thawing ground beef, do so in the refrigerator, not on the counter. While this is tempting, it is also quite risky. Plan ahead.
✓ USDA recommends fully cooking ground beef. Cook ground beef to 160°F...so use a meat thermometer to test for doneness. There should be no pink, and juices should run clear.
✓ When grilling, do not partially grill extra burgers to use later...once you begin cooking, complete the process, then cool slightly and store in the refrigerator/freezer.
✓ Remember to keep both raw and cooked meat out of the danger zone...40°F-140°F.
✓ Do not leave cooked burgers at room temperature for more than 2 hours, or only 1 hour if temperatures are 90°F or higher...which happens if you are picnicking during summer months.
✓ Cooked ground beef may be stored in the refrigerator 3-5 days safely, or frozen up to 3 months for optimum quality.
✓ When reheating cooked ground beef, be sure to bring it to 165°F.
✓ When ordering hamburgers at restaurants or fast food establishments, be sure they are medium to well done, and check for doneness when served...again, no pinkness in color.

Remember, safe food handling is critical to preventing foodborne illness. If you have ever had a case of foodborne illness, you know, it is no fun. It can also be life threatening to the young, the elderly, and those with immune compromised conditions.

~Teresa Hunsaker

7 Easy Energy Boosters
When You Need a Lift

1. Keep your work area well lit. If possible, step away from your desk and get out into the sunlight for a few minutes.
2. Handle challenging tasks first to make the rest of the day easier.
3. Use good posture and take frequent breaks to stretch or stand.
4. Volunteer to help another co-worker.
5. Plan something to look forward to each day.
6. Give yourself credit for what you’ve accomplished instead of worrying that you have too much to do.
7. Stock your desk with high-energy snacks like apples, nuts, and dried fruit.

Source: 50 Ways to Boost Your Energy Without Caffeine, Nursing Online Education Database.