

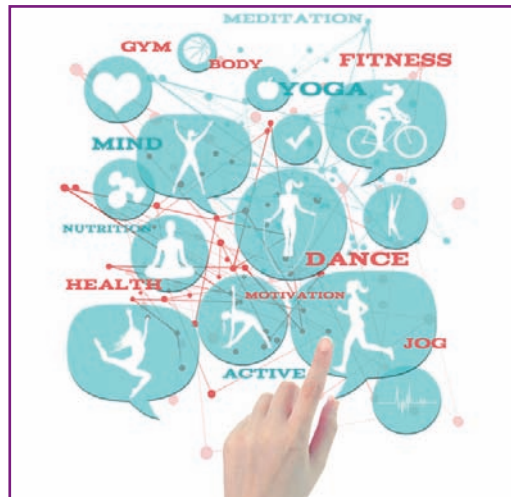


# PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

## Online Wellness Buddies

In diet or exercise programs, the proven standard model for effective results has always been that those enrolled in “group support” or a “buddy system” were the most likely to effectively lose weight and/or stay in better shape.

Now it appears that crucial “peer support” doesn’t necessarily have to be human. In a study by the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, adults in a physician-directed weight loss program given the same basic care were then randomly assigned between two groups: One included bi-weekly group meetings, and the others were given a mobile device to self-monitor their diet



and physical activity, along with bi-weekly coaching calls. Over a one-year period, dieters using the mobile devices lost an average of

nearly nine pounds more at each quarterly weigh-in: 3.1% greater weight loss than the group meeting segment.

Consider the positive impact this implies if you include one of the numerous new mobile/PDA diet and activity tracking devices in your diet/workout program. Check out the applicable “app” store for your

personal digital devices today! Now may be the time to consider including the “new and improved” along with the “tried and true.”

## Investments vs. Life Insurance

All too often the discussion of life insurance can become confused with issues of investment return, options for utilizing the cash values, and expected retirement benefits. Yet one simple truth remains: The key purpose of life insurance for most people is to provide cash to fulfill needs that will go otherwise unmet due to death.

Depending upon your current life situation, those needs may include some or all of the following:

- Mortgage obligations
- Debt repayment
- Funeral/burial expenses

- Spousal support
- Support of children
- College costs
- Everyday living expenses for dependents, such as food and housing
- Medical bills
- Taxes.

Life insurance can be structured to provide a large payout in the event of a premature death, or it can provide a fixed amount throughout the years. Each serves a different purpose depending on your personal needs. Consider scheduling a complete life insurance review today.

## Do the Math on Social Security



As you approach retirement age, are you considering applying for Social Security benefits prior to full retirement age (currently age 66 for most workers)? When is the best time to start receiving Social Security payments?

The simple answer is: The earlier you start accepting checks, the lower they will be. But how much lower? According to the website of the Social Security Administration, [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov), early acceptance of benefits could result in checks as much as 25% lower than the full monthly base amount. And those lower payments are set for the rest of your life. Even future cost-of-living increases to the checks will result in smaller monthly payment gains, since any percentage increase will be applied to the lower initial benefit amount. If you have other resources available for retirement funds, it may be best to delay starting those Social Security checks at least until your full retirement age.

To calculate your benefit amount, as well as to determine the impact of early acceptance of benefits, visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

## Too Little Life Insurance

Recent findings from a 2012 ING U.S. study titled *Insurance Revealed* included the following:

- A majority of parents (54%) had not calculated how much life insurance they need to adequately protect their family.
- A majority of uninsured Americans (51%) considered life insurance to be an expense they couldn't afford—despite historically low premiums.
- More than half (56%) of those with life insurance had secured only three times or less of their annual salary in coverage.
- More than one quarter (27%) felt they should have five to 10 times their

annual salary in coverage.

- Close to half (44%) of Americans had little or no confidence that the amount of life insurance coverage they had was sufficient.
- Close to one quarter (23%) of those between 25 and 34 thought they were too young to purchase life insurance.

How would you respond to the survey? Do you feel your current life insurance protection is adequate or falling far short of your goals? Are there questions or issues about life insurance that may be holding you back from making the right life insurance decisions for you and your family? Call on us—our financial professionals are ready to help.

## Outliving Your Finances

Living a good long life is a goal many people share. But many don't live as happily as they could be in their later years due to erroneous assumptions they'd made as to how much they should have set aside to cover their financial needs during retirement.

People are living longer. Studies show that in the last 50 years alone, average life expectancy has increased by nine years. For example, the average person at retirement age of 65 can expect to live another 19 years. Keep in mind that's just an average—half of all 65-year-olds will live even longer! But that doesn't mean all those years will be healthy. You may encounter healthcare needs that aren't covered by health insurance.



Your expected time of need for retirement funds may vary by other factors as well, such as family history, health and future medical advances. Whether you are still many years away from tapping into your retirement funds or rapidly approaching your first withdrawal date, talk with our financial professionals to be certain your current plans reflect your lengthening life expectancy.

## Protect Personal Income Power

If you are between the ages of 25 and 65, the odds of an accident or illness-related disability leaving you without a paycheck for 90 days or more during your working life are nearly one in four.

There is no doubt protecting your income flow is crucial to your financial health. So if your employer is not currently providing adequate disability income protection or you are self-employed, now is the time to look into the purchase of an individual disability income policy. Meet with our professionals, and we will work with you to consider the key things to look for when choosing the proper disability income coverage.

Here are 10 of those key items, as provided by the Insurance Information Institute:

- Definition of disability
- Length of benefit period
- Replace at least 60-70% of your total taxable earnings
- Coverage for disability resulting from either accident or illness
- A cost-of-living option for increasing benefits



- Include “residual” or partial benefits if you can still work part-time
- Transition benefits while rebuilding a business or professional practice
- Non-cancelable coverage, where neither the benefits nor premiums

will change as long as premiums are properly paid

- Financial stability of the insurance company
- Waiting period from the time of becoming disabled to when benefits begin to be paid.

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Thank you for  
your referral.

If you're pleased with  
us, spread the word! We'll  
be happy to give the same  
great service to all of  
your friends and business  
associates

## Default 401(k) at Work

If you are enrolled in a 401(k) plan at work, your investment options may often appear to be an alphabet soup of confusing options. Don't feel alone. Financial studies show the majority of retirement plan enrollees are in the “default” option selected by their employer. Evidently, rather than making specific choices to meet their own needs, the employee simply allowed the “automatic” option to kick in at the time of enrollment.

Automatic options are a convenient way for people to start investing through work, but they are not always the optimal choice for every employee. The attention and time it takes to understand choices on your own, however, can be daunting. Additionally, not all employers provide personal assistance in the decision process.

If you are not sure of the difference between a target-date fund, a guaranteed investment contract, and an exchange-traded fund or no one has explained the difference between an equity and balanced fund, our financial professionals are here to help.

## Default 401(k) at Work

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