

Blogger Zina Kumok: Saving Money Helped Me Prepare for My Future and Even Find Love

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Youth around the world have been celebrating Global Money Week (GMW) 2015 all week as they look to become confident, skilled economic citizens. This year's GMW theme: "Save Today. Safe Tomorrow." The message is pretty clear – if you want a more secure financial future, then you need to start doing something about it today. In honor of global money awareness, KWHS asked personal-finance blogger Zina Kumok, 26, to write about one of her favorite topics: saving money. Kumok, who recently paid off \$28,000 in student-loan debt much sooner than expected, wants you to know that saving is "empowering your future self with money from your current self," a habit that could quite literally change your life.

When you're young, it's easy to think that you don't need to save your money. Even if you're working a part-time job, it's not hard to spend everything you make. If your parents are paying for most of your expenses, it might seem silly not to enjoy your hard-earned paycheck.

But saving while you're young is the best thing you can do. Before you're in college taking out loans, before you're working your first real job, before you have a mortgage. Now is the best time to save. Before you have obligations, bills and debt, you should learn how to put away your money.

'Saving Is a Skill'

If it doesn't seem like you have a lot to save for, then you aren't thinking hard enough. The summer before college, I worked at Waffle House from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and then at PacSun from 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. I would get home from Waffle House around 2:30 p.m. and count my tips, still smelling like hash browns and bacon. Then I would shower, relax and head to work at the mall.

I had few expenses that summer. When I wasn't working, I was watching stupid movies with my friends and occasionally getting ice cream. I worked so much because I wanted to have money for school — not for things like books or tuition, but for fun things like concerts, eating out and buying useless junk from Target.

I saved money so I could be prepared. I didn't mind driving around with my high school friends that summer, not really doing anything. But I wanted to know that if a band was coming to my school that fall, I could afford to buy a ticket.

Saving can help you to appreciate what you have. If you're trying to buy a new laptop, spending \$10 at the movie theater can seem like a harder decision. If you're trying to pay for your car insurance, you might be more inclined to hit Goodwill for a new blouse instead of the mall. Saving money can mean you find more creative things to do with your friends. It doesn't have to mean you live like a recluse.

Saving doesn't have to feel like deprivation. It's empowering your future self with money from your current self. I have rarely looked back at my life and thought, "Wow, I wish I had saved less money." But I've often been glad for having a security blanket in my bank account.

Saving is a skill. It doesn't come naturally to most people. Like any habit, it takes time to learn. That's why saving is so vital while you're in high school. It's important to learn these habits while you don't have a lot to lose. I wish I had learned how to save better while I was young. I relied too much on my parents to bail me out, and I didn't have a good idea of how much things cost in the real world.

It's a lot harder to learn how to save when you're raising a family or switching careers. If you learn to save while you're still in high school, then you won't be enticed to go into credit card debt in college or forced to take a low-paying job instead of a highly coveted unpaid internship that could help you figure out what you want to do with your life.

Love in London

You can save for many things. I recommend saving an emergency fund. I can't tell you how many times it helped having an extra \$100 or more that I had set aside in my bank account. That's how much it cost to get my boyfriend's car back after it was towed. That's how much it cost to pay for an overage fee for luggage after I flew back from studying abroad in London. That's how much it cost to pay a speeding ticket my junior year. Saving money can be a life saver.

Saving gives you freedom – and possibly so much more. It was because I was diligent about saving my summer earnings that I was able to study abroad in London before my junior year of college. If it weren't for that, I would not have started dating a cute boy from my trip, whom I will now be marrying next month. Start saving now. You just never know.

Conversation Starters

Are you a saver? If so, what strategies do you use to save your money? What sacrifices have you made in the name of saving? If you don't save, what might help you get started?

Describe a time when you wish you had savings. How would the outcome have been different if you had money in the bank?

Child & Youth Finance International organizes Global Money Week (GMW), which happens each March. Using the link below, research GMW 2015 and discuss the initiative with your class. What is GMW? Why is it important? What are some of the ways that countries celebrate GMW? What might you do to help raise awareness about money in your own community?

Related Links

- [Global Money Week 2015](#)
- [America Saves](#)
- [54 Ways to Save Money](#)
- [Debt Free After Three](#)
- [KWHS: Two Young Women Share their Struggles and Successes with Student-loan Debt](#)
- [KWHS: Why It Pays To Save: Knowing the Time Value of Money](#)