

fall
2017

The Times OF YOUR LIFE

A Message... from GCES

The colors, sights, sounds and smells of autumn are upon us. Regardless of the climate you reside in, this time of year generally brings a change to our clothing, our activities and to our attitudes. Vacation's over, school's in session, and gardens are beginning their seasonal transitions.

As you make your way through this colorful season, and the weather that goes with it, we hope you enjoy all of the changes Mother Nature graces us with.

We are here for you when you need us - our office can assist you with all of your insurance needs. Call us with any questions, any time!

By contacting us, you may receive information regarding insurance products available for purchase.

An Attitude of Gratitude

What is Gratitude? The basic definition notes it as *the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation and to return kindness.*

It is appreciation, gratefulness, and thankfulness which should be etched into our personal list of beliefs and made a daily habit.

Gratitude means noticing simple pleasures, and acknowledging everything that you receive. It means learning to live your life as if everything were a miracle, and being aware on a continuous basis of how much you've been given. Gratitude shifts your focus from what your life lacks to the abundance that is already present.

"When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around."
-Willie Nelson

As noted in *Psychology Today,* there are 7 scientifically proven benefits of gratitude: It opens the door to more relationships, improves physical health, improves psychological health, enhances empathy and reduces aggression, promotes better sleep, improves self-esteem and increases mental strength.

"When one has a grateful heart, life is so beautiful." *- Roy T. Bennett*

According to gratitude researcher Robert Emmons, gratitude is just happiness that we recognize after-the fact to have been caused by the kindness of others. Gratitude doesn't just make us happier, it is happiness in and of itself!

A show of gratitude for a present, for a favor, for a kindness shown or for a friendship is a gift we give back to the giver. Showing gratitude makes us feel better because we know that the recipient of our gratitude feels the same.

"We must find time to stop and thank people who make a difference in our lives." - *John F. Kennedy*

While we should note our gratitude for life and all its simple or complex pleasures on a daily basis, this time of the year has become the standard bearer for showing our love, appreciation and gratitude to others. These last months of the year, this season of bounty, with numerous holidays scattered throughout, steers our focus toward being thankful for others and how they interact in our lives. It's a season of giving - giving thanks and showing our love and gratitude.

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."
-William Arthur Ward



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8 Ways You Could Miss Out on Social Security Benefits

"Rule #1: Never lose money. Rule #2: Never forget rule #1"

- Warren Buffett

Aiming to never lose money is one way that super investor Warren Buffett has become one of the world's wealthiest people, and his two rules can be useful in our financial lives, too. It's hard to avoid losing some money in the stock market -- though, ideally, your gains will far outstrip your losses -- but when it comes to Social Security, there are ways to lose some or all of your benefits that you need to be aware of, so that you don't miss out on dollars you could have received. After all, Social Security is a critical source of retirement income, greatly affecting your future financial security.

Here are eight ways you could miss out on some or all of your Social Security benefits:

1. Not maximizing your benefits

A key way to lose Social Security benefits is to end up collecting smaller benefits than you otherwise could have. That can happen if you don't understand how those benefits are calculated and you don't make the most of the formula.

The formula the Social Security Administration (SSA) uses to calculate your benefits is based on the income you earned in your 35 highest-earning working years (with those earnings adjusted for inflation). So if you have only 30 years of work when you retire, the formula will be plugging in five zeros for five years, leading to smaller checks. So if possible, aim to have a full 35 years of earnings.

Meanwhile, the greater those earnings are, the heftier your Social Security checks will be. If you can plump up your earnings, perhaps via a temporary part-time job or by seeking raises more aggressively or even changing jobs, you may be able to increase your ultimate benefits. And if you have 35 years of earnings but some of them feature meager earnings, it can be worth working an extra year or two at a good income in order to replace some low earning years with high-earning years.

2. Not reporting your earnings

Since your Social Security benefits are based on your earnings, you can lose out on a lot of benefits - or all benefits - by not reporting your earnings, or underreporting them. According to the folks at Nolo, under-reporting or failing to report earnings is the top way that people cheat on taxes. Those who are self-employed, perhaps working in the new "gig economy" or running their own businesses, are among those likely to do so.

If you're able to be sneaky on your taxes and avoid paying some by reporting less income than you actually earned, it can seem like a big win, saving you money and not really hurting anyone. Well, it's illegal, it can hurt our society, that runs on tax revenues, and while it can save you taxes upfront, it can also rob you of much-needed Social Security benefits in retirement.

3. Not coordinating with your spouse

You can also boost your Social Security benefits by coordinating withdrawal strategies with your spouse - or lose out on some benefits by not doing so. For example, remember that the longer you delay starting to collect benefits, up to age 70, the larger those checks will be -- and conversely, starting to collect early will leave you with smaller checks - though many more of them. So if you and your spouse have very different earnings records, you might start collecting the benefits of the spouse with the lower lifetime earnings record early, while delaying starting to collect the benefits of the higher-earning spouse. That way, you both get to enjoy some income earlier, and when the higher earner hits 70, you can collect their extra-large checks. Also, should that higher earning spouse die first, the spouse with the smaller earnings history can collect those bigger benefit checks.

Continued on page 3

As an independent financial professional, I appreciate the business, friendship and ongoing trust that my valued clients have placed in me. As you probably know, favorable introductions are an important part of my business. Should you know of any friends or relatives who may also benefit from my dedicated services, please do not hesitate to send them my way. You can be confident that I will provide them with the same great service and the utmost respect that I have shown to you and your family. Thank you!

Reminders:



Daylight Saving Time ends at 2:00 am Sunday November 5th! Set your clocks back 1 hour

It's also a good time to change smoke detector batteries and furnace filters



1. Fire
2. Meat
3. A Window
4. Incorrectly
5. A Secret
6. A Stamp
7. A Coffin
8. The Letter M
9. Tomorrow
10. A River

8 Ways continued:

4. Divorcing too soon

If you're divorced and were married for at least 10 years, you may be able to claim benefits based on your ex-spouse's earnings (even if that ex has remarried) -- if you've not remarried. This can be helpful if your ex earned much more than you and thus built up bigger benefits. If you're not yet divorced but are planning to split from your partner, give some thought to timing. If you can remain married for 10 years before divorcing, it can pay off financially, via Social Security benefits. Divorce too soon, and you can miss out on those benefit checks that might be bigger than yours. (Of course, don't let Social Security benefits dictate when you divorce -- but do factor it into your thinking.)

5. Remarrying after a divorce

If you're enjoying Social Security benefit checks based on the earnings record of an ex-spouse, know that you'll lose them if you remarry. Once remarried, you'll be entitled to collect spousal benefits based on your current spouse's earnings record, not those of your ex-spouse. It's worth noting that if you're collecting survivor benefits tied to an ex-spouse who passed away, you won't lose those by remarrying, as long as you don't remarry until age 60 or later.

6. Working too much

Another way to miss out on Social Security benefits is to work too much if you claim early. If you're planning to start collecting benefits before your full retirement age (which is 66 or 67 for most of us) and you want to work some then, too, be careful -- because after a certain point, your benefits may be reduced. The SSA explains: "If you're younger than full retirement age during all of 2017, we must deduct $1 from your benefits for each $2 you earn above $16,920." The year you reach your full retirement age, the earning limit jumps to $44,880, and the penalty decreases to $1 withheld for every $3 earned above the limit. Fortunately, though, the money withheld isn't lost. Instead, it's factored into the benefit checks you receive later, which end up increased.

7. Defaulting on student loans

Here's another way to lose Social Security benefits: Default on some debts, and your benefits may be garnished. Specifically, up to 15% of Social Security benefits may be taken for debt repayment -- and that has been happening to many thousands of Americans, often because of student loan debt and often because the retirees in question co-signed loans for their children or grandchildren.

8. Politicians taking it away

Finally, a last way that you can lose Social Security benefits is if our leaders in Washington let the program continue on its path to eventual depletion of funds. That's likely to happen around 2034, at which point payment checks won't disappear, but they'll likely shrink by roughly 25%, according to the Social Security Administration, leaving beneficiaries with about 75% of what they were expecting.

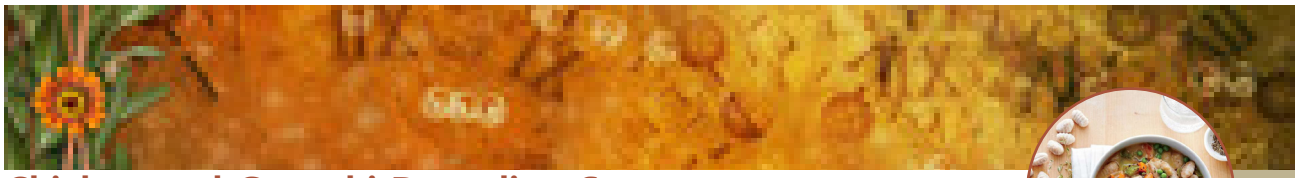
The situation is far from hopeless, as there are lots of ways that the Social Security system can be strengthened, if politicians choose to do that - some more pleasant than others.

There are lots of ways that you can lose some or all of your Social Security benefits. It's worth acquainting yourself with the ways, so that you don't fall victim to any of them needlessly.

The $16,122 Social Security bonus most retirees completely overlook

If you're like most Americans, you're a few years (or more) behind on your retirement savings. But a handful of little-known "Social Security secrets" could help ensure a boost in your retirement income. For example: one easy trick could pay you as much as $16,122 more - each year! Once you learn how to maximize your Social Security benefits, it's possible you could retire confidently with the peace of mind we're all after.

Go to www.motleyfool.com to learn more about these strategies.





Chicken and Gnocchi Dumpling Soup

Homey and hearty chicken and dumplings has never been faster or easier, thanks to store-bought gnocchi

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 12 ounces, skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1 1/2 cups chopped red onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped carrot
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 5 cups unsalted chicken stock, divided
- 8 oz whole wheat gnocchi
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup frozen green peas
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

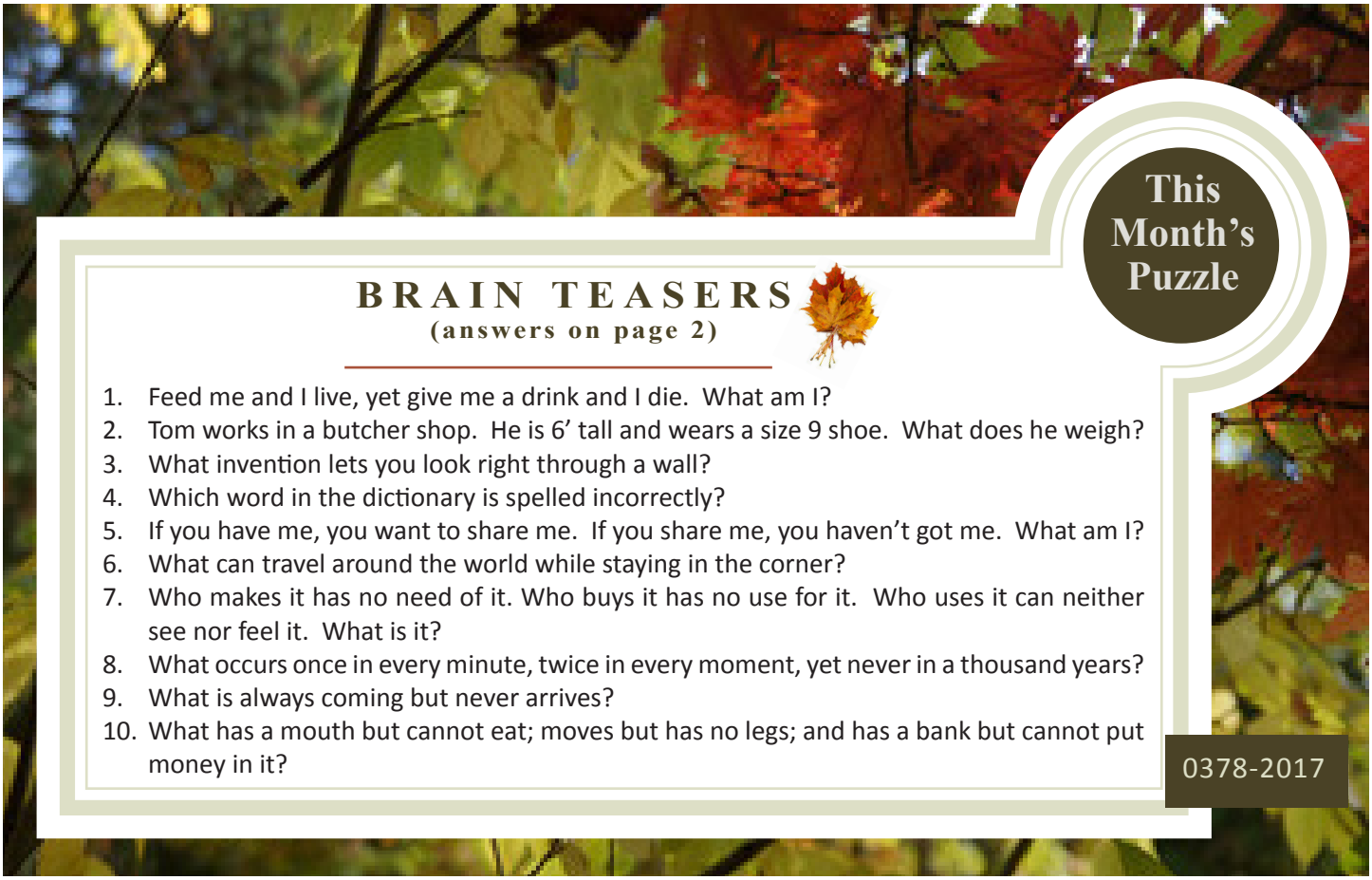
Directions:

Step 1: Heat a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add oil; swirl to coat. Sprinkle chicken with 1/4 tsp salt. Add chicken to pan; cook 3 minutes or until browned, stirring occasionally. Remove chicken from pan.

Step 2: Add onion, celery, carrot, rosemary and thyme to pan; cook 7 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add 4 cups stock, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, and simmer 8 minutes. Add gnocchi to pan; cook 3 minutes or until gnocchi float to the surface.

Step 3: Combine remaining 1 cup stock and flour in a bowl, stirring with a whisk. Slowly add stock mixture to pan, stirring constantly with a whisk. Stir in chicken and peas; cook 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 1/4 tsp salt and pepper.

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 15 minutes | 6 servings | Calories: 224



This Month's Puzzle

BRAIN TEASERS

(answers on page 2)

1. Feed me and I live, yet give me a drink and I die. What am I?
2. Tom works in a butcher shop. He is 6' tall and wears a size 9 shoe. What does he weigh?
3. What invention lets you look right through a wall?
4. Which word in the dictionary is spelled incorrectly?
5. If you have me, you want to share me. If you share me, you haven't got me. What am I?
6. What can travel around the world while staying in the corner?
7. Who makes it has no need of it. Who buys it has no use for it. Who uses it can neither see nor feel it. What is it?
8. What occurs once in every minute, twice in every moment, yet never in a thousand years?
9. What is always coming but never arrives?
10. What has a mouth but cannot eat; moves but has no legs; and has a bank but cannot put money in it?

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