Chapter 1: Money and My Family in Japan

"Whatever you do, don't spend money you don't have and don't take out a loan."

That was the advice my father gave me when I got married to my first husband. I grew up in Japan listening to news about entire families comitting suicide because of the debts they couldn't pay. That was scary to think about.

My parents were always frugal people for a very good reason. When they were children, both of their homes were burned down during World War II. My grandpa on my mom's side died at war, so I never met him. My grandma became a widow, but she may have received compensation from the government. She took care of my aunt, my mom, and my uncle by herself. My uncle and his little family lived with my grandma until she died of cancer while in her 90s.

My parents and siblings and I lived with my dad's parents. My dad is the oldest son of my grandparents, and it was the custom for the oldest son to stay and take care of the parents. The household consisted of my grandparents, parents, older brother, younger sister, and me.

Neither of my parents had the chance to attend college, so they didn't make much money. Still, they managed to send my brother to a technical college, my sister to a junior college, and me to a junior college in Japan and another two years at an American college. They even paid for a big part of my sister's big wedding, another big wedding for my brother, a trip to attend my first wedding in the United States, and helped my first husband and I to put a large down payment on our house. How could an ordinary couple with lower-class income do all that without incurring debt? My short answer is that they are very hardworking, frugal, and selfless people. I believe that they wanted us three kids to live a better life than they did because they watched their parent(s) struggle after becoming homeless.

How My Mom Saved Money

My parents lived with my dad's parents during most of their marriage. Although living with in-laws wasn't a happy thing, my mom put up with it until my grandma died. Three sets of my aunts and uncles lived the next three houses down, so you can imagine how my mom wasn't comfortable living there. Living with my grandparents did provide a couple of advantages though. My parents had fewer bills to pay and free babysitters. My grandparents owned the house until they died, and it passed down to my parents. While my grandparents were well, they shared the bills with my parents.

My mom cooked rice every day. Japanese people wash the rice carefully before cooking because that affects the flavor. My mom always kept a plastic tub in the kitchen sink area and poured the water that she just used to rinse the rice into it. Then she would reuse the water for her garden. Plastic shopping bags were neatly stored in the kitchen. One bag was always hanging by the kitchen sink, and all of our little trash cans were lined with those plastic shopping bags. My mom never spent any money on trash bags.

My mom was a very good cook. Every morning she got up before anybody else in the house and cooked. She cooked breakfast and packed lunch; one for her work and two for my sister and me. We never went out to eat unless we were away from home. My mom always told us not to waste anything, not even a grain of rice, because somebody worked hard to grow and harvest it. I often saw my mom packing leftovers for work lunch. My mom never wasted any food. Her refrigerator was always organized, and she always used everything before the food spoiled. I never saw any food thrown into a garbage can. Amazing!

My mom always turned off the heat just before the food was fully cooked. The heat that was left on the pan finished cooking the food, which saved electricity. She let the food sit for about 5-10 minutes after turning off the heat.

My mom was a bargain hunter. She worked for a tailor as an office clerk. There were many small stores near her workplace and she always knew which stores had good sales and discounts. She usually did her shopping after she got off work and never bought us the most fashionable clothing. However, we lacked nothing. She took care of her own clothing very well and gave me some of her clothing when I became my full size. I still have many of them.

My parents didn't own a clothes dryer. Laundry was done almost every night in a small washing machine. We hung our clean, wet clothing outside to dry. When the weather was bad, we hung our clothing in the house.

My parents never had a central heating system in the house. Where they live, the temperature would get as low as 32°F during winter and up to 95°F during summer. They just had a small space heater in the kitchen and two heating tables for when it got cold. We all dressed warmly in sweaters and other layered clothing. We turned off the electricity at bedtime, and we slept under thick, fluffy futon blankets.

There were two air-conditioning window units in the house, but they weren’t used often. There were many fans in the house, and we learned to live without air-conditioning most of the time.

My Frugal Grandma

My grandma was very frugal and careful in certain ways. One important thing I learned from my grandma was to always turn off the lights as soon as no one was using one. All the light bulbs in the house were fluorescent. My grandma basically patrolled the entire downstairs several times each evening. She almost always wore a kimono, and she washed her own clothing by hand.

My grandma hardly ever bought anything other than food. I’ve only seen her go to the neighborhood produce store and a small convenience store on our street. She didn’t put a lot of value on things, probably because she once lost everything when there was a small bombing during World War II. She preferred giving us grandkids money instead of spending it on herself. Instead of collecting things or spending on services for herself, she spent a lot of time talking to people.

Now that you have learned about me and my family, it's time to start learning the basics. The first thing is budgeting. I will also talk a little about mortgages here.

Chapter 2: Budgeting

Before you learn how to save money, I have to talk about budgeting. You really shouldn't skip it unless you already know this well. This is a must! Please keep reading.

What is Budgeting and Why is it Important to Budget?

I know that budgeting isn't the most exciting topic. Lots of people hate it. Unfortunately, it's necessary if you want to handle your money well. Budgeting is basically the act of planning to buy what you need without spending money you don't have. If you spend more than what you have, you're going to have to borrow some money, and that creates debt.

If you go shopping with $50 in your wallet, you will want to spend $50 or less. You might put a book in your basket that costs $15, a DVD movie that costs $20, and a shirt that costs $20 in your shopping cart. At the checkout, you find out that the total is $58.85, including the tax. Then you'll have to put something back to make it fit under $50.

If your paycheck is $2,000 a month, you don't want to spend $2,400 because that's $400 more than what you can afford to pay. So that you don't spend more than you can afford to pay, you need a plan. Without a good plan, you can easily spend more than what you have, especially if you use your credit card.

Table of Contents

If you would like to read more, here is the link to purchase this book:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B082DPRSS6

Waste Not, Borrow Not : An Easy Guide to Finding Money You Didn't Know You Had
By Takako Daniel

Here are just a few of the reviews:

MTF
5.0 out of 5 stars
Not Just Another Money Book
Reviewed in the United States on December 8, 2019
Format: Kindle EditionVerified Purchase
Takako Daniel definitely knows the value of a dollar. Drawing on her unique Japanese heritage and American lifestyle, she's successfully created an easy-to-read book full of money-saving tips anyone can use. For those needing extra money in their budget now, Takako provides many clever and simple ways to find it fast. For those just starting out on their own, this book is a must to learn how to create a simple budget and get the most for their hard-earned bucks - especially in a consumer-driven society. And for those who are already pretty thrifty, they will surely find new ways to save money they haven't thought of before (I didn't realize that using the cheap air filters would actually save money!). But for those who really want to make the most of their money - pay off debt, save for retirement, or stay at home with young children - Takako shows how consistently using small money-saving measures can cumulatively make big things happen. Highly recommended!
One person found this helpful

Andrea Brownfield
5.0 out of 5 stars
Easy to read action plan
Reviewed in the United States on December 9, 2019
Format: Kindle EditionVerified Purchase
This book is a great compilation of easy to implement money savings strategies intended to kick start your frugality. Written in layman's terms, the book is easy to understand, and offers suggestions for immediate savings. Give this book a try and let it help you reach your savings goals.

cameron
5.0 out of 5 stars
Easy step by step guide!
Reviewed in the United States on December 9, 2019
Format: Kindle EditionVerified Purchase
A straightforward, easy to read & understand guide to saving. In just minutes, you have a budget system & numerous ways to make extra money. Definitely recommending to my spouse, as well. With Daniel's user friendly approach, we'll be saving in no time.

Karen
5.0 out of 5 stars
Practical and a sensible viewpoint
Reviewed in the United States on December 10, 2019
Format: Kindle EditionVerified Purchase
I am not a minimalist, but I have taken on a more minimalist, less wasteful viewpoint in many aspects of my life over the last few years. This is in possessions and actions (like not wasting water, I mean...). This book has a nice viewpoint and drives it home that being frugal doesn't mean you're depriving yourself. It means you're using/saving money for better things, rather than wasting it on things that don't really improve your life. I like that!

My first book, Young, Fit, & Happy : Unlocking the simple, frugal secrets to looking and feeling good, is a short read for busy people. It was published last summer, before I joined Self-Publishing School. My then 13 year old daughter edited and helped me publish the book. If you'd like to read it, here is the link: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07V6T414G