

# NEWS You Can Use

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## If you want to become happier and more financially successful, you'll need to tame that lizard brain.

Neuroscientific research indicates that the human brain is hardwired for maximum complacency. We humans tend to freeze up when faced with critical decisions. This isn't necessarily because we are lazy, our brains are designed for the here and now. Human gray matter has a tough time concerning itself with future events.

Part of the limbic system, the almond-shaped set of neurons located in the temporal lobe, is known as the "amygdala." It is a critical player in processing emotions and the part of the brain that gives us the so-called fight or flight response. No matter how rational and disciplined we imagine ourselves to be, the lizard brain tends to trip us up,

making everyday life an uphill battle. It isn't that we are fighting the future as much as we are having trouble seeing it. Fear of risk, fear of loss, and fear of missing out all emanate from that area of the brain that is most resistant to change. Those fears can cause even the most intelligent people to do crazy things with their money or, like many folks, do nothing at all.



The good news is that you can train your brain so it doesn't wind up running the show. You will then be able to avoid making decisions that could negatively impact your life.

Taming Your Lizard Brain: To attain financial freedom, terrific relationships, and great health, you need emotional intelligence by Pendragon Tim Chng

## Best Mulches for Your Veggie Garden



Properly applied mulch provides many benefits, including the potential to reduce weeds in your garden by up to 80%. You'll water less since mulch captures water, keeps the ground cooler, and maintains soil moisture. Perhaps the greatest benefit of all is that mulches add organic matter to the soil to feed your plants, improving native soils tremendously.

The following materials make the best mulches: **Grass clippings, Hay or Straw:** Use in early spring, only if free of herbicides and pesticides.

**Compost:** Use quality, evenly-decomposed compost that is free of large clumps.

**Cover crops-** Masses of plants used to cover garden soil during fall, winter, and early spring are tilled back under, biomass back into the soil.

<https://www.theprairiehomestead.com/2024/04/best-mulch-for-vegetable-garden.html>

## Fed Holds Rates Steady as Americans Name Inflation their Top Financial Problem

**The Federal Reserve acknowledged stalling progress in bringing down inflation to its 2% goal and opted to hold its benchmark interest rate at current levels.**

The central bank also said that it would slow the pace of reducing its balance sheet starting in June. That decision ensures money markets don't experience an episode of volatility and stress as seen in September 2019, Powell noted.

This action takes place as, for the third consecutive year, the percentage of Americans naming inflation or the high cost of living as the most important financial problem facing their family has reached a new high. The issue of inflation is top for 41% of respondents this year, up slightly from 35% a year ago and 32% in 2022. Before 2022, the highest percentage mentioning inflation was 18% in 2008. Inflation has been named by less than 10% in most other readings since the

question was first asked in 2005.

Other significant problems Americans identify include having too much debt (8%), healthcare costs (7%), lack of



money or low wages (7%), and energy costs or gas prices (6%).

A separate question asks Americans how much they worry about eight specific personal financial matters. Inflation's influence is apparent in the percentage who worry maintaining their standard of living. Over half (55%) are very or moderately worried about maintaining their living standards, the third straight year.

[federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/monetary20240501a.htm](https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/monetary20240501a.htm)

[news.gallup.com/poll/644690/americans-continue-name-inflation-top-financial-problem.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/poll/644690/americans-continue-name-inflation-top-financial-problem.aspx)

## Birth at First Bite!



April 29, 2024 ROYAL OAK, Mich. – Retirement planner Sean Sparkman and his wife Alyse were told by doctors that it would be at least twelve hours before their baby arrived. The couple was encouraged to leave the hospital and get something to eat. But shortly after sitting down, Alyse’s water broke.

**“She took one bite and goes, ‘My water’s breaking! Go get the car!’”** Sean told a local television reporter.

Before Sean could retrieve his car, Alyse Sparkman went into labor right at their table. Fortunately for the couple, two nurses and medical technician happened to be sitting at the table next to the couple and were able to assist in the delivery. At around 8 p.m. that night, Penelope Lilly Sparkman was born, weighing four pounds and eight ounces.

[nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/cherry-blossom-bloom-predictions-spring](https://nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/cherry-blossom-bloom-predictions-spring)

## Will Hospital Closures Affect Your Retirement?

**A total of 195 rural hospitals have shut down since 2005, according to data compiled by the University of North Carolina’s Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, including 100 hospitals that have shuttered their doors completely and 95 facilities that no longer provide inpatient services.**

More than 60 million Americans live in rural areas, and they are generally older. Rural residents can face less access to health care services and have to travel greater distances to receive care when a facility closes. Research indicates a potential relationship between traveling farther to receive health care and poorer health outcomes.

Overall, more than 600 rural hospitals – nearly 30% of all rural hospitals in the country – were at recent risk of closing due to financial pressures, according to 2023 data from the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform.

A primary driver of these closures is financial instability, often rooted in low patient volumes and high operational costs. Rural hospitals typically serve smaller populations with a higher proportion of

uninsured and underinsured patients, leading to significant financial strain. This situation is intensified by the fact that rural populations are often older and sicker, requiring more intensive and costly care.

**Healthcare analysts believe that larger cities will also see an uptick in closures in 2024 and beyond.**



Hospitals can streamline and cut some administrative costs. Increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates can also reduce the risk of closure, but rural and urban Americans can prepare for their own health emergencies by budgeting for longer trips to get the health care they need.

[montana.edu/ageconmt/newsandposts/ruralhospitalclosures.html](https://montana.edu/ageconmt/newsandposts/ruralhospitalclosures.html)

[shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/](https://shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/)

[beckershospitalreview.com/finance/5-hospital-closures-in-2024.html](https://beckershospitalreview.com/finance/5-hospital-closures-in-2024.html)

## It Happened In



**May 10<sup>th</sup> 1869** – The Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways were first linked at Promontory Point, Utah. A golden spike was driven by Leland Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, to celebrate the linkage. It is said that he missed the spike on his first swing which brought roars of laughter from men who had driven thousands upon thousands of spikes themselves.

**May 18<sup>th</sup> 1980** – Mount St. Helens volcano erupted in southwestern Washington State spewing steam and ash over 11 miles into the sky. This was the first major eruption since 1857.

**May 27<sup>th</sup> 1937** – In San Francisco, 200,000 people celebrated the grand opening of the Golden Gate Bridge by strolling across it.

<http://www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar/may.htm>

## Life Insurance Missteps

Considering life insurance? Shop carefully, with insight from an insurance professional to avoid some of these all-too-common missteps.

**Buying the first policy you see.** Take the time to compare a few plans – rates as well as coverage terms.<sup>1</sup>

**Buying only on price.** Inexpensive life insurance may provide less coverage than your household really needs.<sup>1</sup>

**Waiting too long to buy coverage.** Coverage is less expensive when you are young and in good health. Later in life, some serious medical condition or illness could come to light that may require your policy to have more expensive pre-existing health conditions or policy caps.

Also, guaranteed acceptance policies can take 2-3 years to become full force. Should you pass away in the interim, your beneficiaries will probably not collect the policy's death benefit; instead, they may receive the premiums you have paid plus interest.<sup>2</sup>

**Not realizing that permanent life insurance policies expire.** Permanent life insurance products come with maturity dates, and 85 has been a common maturity date. Living to be 90 or 100 is more common now, creating the possibility that you could outlive your policy. The upside is that you will receive a payout from the insurer, which may correspond to the policy's cash value at the maturity date.



The downside? If you want further insurance coverage, it may not be obtainable – or it could be staggeringly expensive.<sup>3</sup>

1 - [smartasset.com/life-insurance/5-mistakes-to-avoid-when-buying-life-insurance](http://smartasset.com/life-insurance/5-mistakes-to-avoid-when-buying-life-insurance)

2 - [nasdaq.com/article/4-errors-to-avoid-with-your-life-insurance-cm868133](http://nasdaq.com/article/4-errors-to-avoid-with-your-life-insurance-cm868133)

3 - [kiplinger.com/article/saving/T063-C032-S014-could-unclaimed-money-be-yours.html](http://kiplinger.com/article/saving/T063-C032-S014-could-unclaimed-money-be-yours.html)