



Brighten a Walker, Brighten a Life

For Immediate Release

“Lessons in Coping with Economic Anxiety – A Gift from Our Elders”

New Survey Results: Top Lesson from Seniors about Economy? Gratitude Trumps Fear

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Survey results released in conjunction with national conference [Aging in America 2009](#)

- **How to best handle struggle with today’s economic fears and stress?**
- **New nationwide survey asks adults what lessons they learned from their elders who have been through economic challenges before**
- **#1 response was gratitude. Almost 80% said their elders taught them that being thankful can calm economic anxiety. Top four lessons:**
 - 1. Gratitude**
 - 2. Perseverance**
 - 3. Importance of family and friends**
 - 4. Humor and optimism**
- **Key message about what to avoid? Elders said don’t listen to fears of others**

Worries about the economy are reportedly becoming more common and distressing for many Americans (*USA Today* 2/2/09, or *WebMD* 10/8/08). But a new nationwide survey examines one longstanding source for lessons on how to cope – seniors who have been through such challenging economic times before.

The survey “*Lessons in Coping with Economic Anxiety – A Gift from Our Elders*” was concluded in January and was sponsored by Boulder Colorado-based **WalkerWonder.com**, maker of patent-pending decorative accessories for mobility walkers and rollators. Results of the survey were released in conjunction with WalkerWonder’s participation in the national conference *Aging in America 2009*. Participants in the survey were 153 adult men and women living in 28 states across the US and ranging in age from 19-79. According to company spokesperson Kathleen Kneeland, a central question asked of respondents was “What have you been taught by your grandparents, parents, or older friends about how to cope with your fears during hard economic times?”

The responses to the survey express the accumulated wisdom of many seniors who have lived through such economic periods themselves and who, as grandparents or parents, have shared their perspectives about American ideals.

The most frequently mentioned teaching was gratitude. 79% of survey participants said that their elders had emphasized the basic act of appreciation for one’s current blessings as a way of calming economic fears. Moreover, almost one-third (32%) ranked thankfulness as one of the top two messages they had received from their elders about dealing with financial stress. Also, of the respondents who cited this lesson, over two-thirds said it had been especially applied to appreciating the simple things in life, things their elders saw as easily overlooked in a busy, consumer-driven economy. Said a woman from New York, “My mother went through the Depression. My grandmother had to work at menial jobs to put a roof over their heads and food on the table. But I never heard her complain about those days... Simple things, but they were grateful for them.”

Second most-frequently cited message: perseverance, the determination to be strong and keep going. 58% of survey participants said that their elders had taught them the importance of simply having courage and backbone during hard economic times. A young man from California said, "My grandfather died during the Vietnam War leaving my grandmother with six hungry children. She overcame the hardship of raising a family by herself in her early 30s despite losing two of her children [to illness]...She raised my mother and my mother's siblings to become caring parents themselves. A lesson that I have learned from my family history is that...as cliché as it may be...to be alive is to never give up."

The third key theme: half of survey respondents said that their elders taught them to cherish and rely on friends and family during challenging economic times, saying that these deep and longstanding relationships were among life's real treasures. In the words of a woman from Georgia, "My Mom always said, 'Money comes and goes; as long as you keep your family around you, you will be rich.'"

The fourth major lesson: humor and optimism. Overall about 25% of survey participants cited either of these as one of the top two messages they had gotten from elders about how to best handle economic pressures. A respondent from California commented, "In the first few years after my parents emigrated to the US, they were starting their lives over with an empty slate. No prior knowledge of English, no friends, no jobs, and little money...My dad was always the optimistic parent, encouraging my mom that everything would get to the way it was. Our family would be happy again. Through him, I learned that whatever life throws at you, don't just give up but try to find other things that you can be thankful and happy about and soon everything will be just fine." And a woman from Alabama said this: "When my husband's job was suddenly downsized in 1974...my daddy wrote me a letter. He first reassured me that work of some kind would be found. He then gave me some wonderful insight into finding inner strength when times are tough. I have reread the letter many times over the years when facing challenges, whether economic or emotional. My dad was a Marine who served in World War II, and he also grew up during the Great Depression...He had a great, sarcastic sense of humor which I loved."

And lastly, what **not** to do when it comes to coping with economic worries? 25% of survey participants said their elders also have valuable wisdom about this. Key message: don't listen to the fears of others. Said a man from Texas, "My family has shown me to remain calm even in the most difficult of times. I'm going to college right now, and yes it's scary. My parents taught me not to listen to the TV too much. If I keep plugged into the TV I'm going to be scared completely, and I will never do anything...Don't spread fear. Spread love, generosity, and understanding."

Commenting on the results of the survey, Kneeland said, "The survey results clearly show how important elders can be in our families and communities as teachers, mentors, and role models. Our elders can obviously offer a great deal of practical and hard-earned wisdom right now, especially helpful at time when so many of us want a little reassurance. We think this is something to celebrate and for which we can be grateful."

About WalkerWonder.com

WalkerWonder designs and manufactures a broad line of innovative, patent-pending walker accessory sets. Colorful banners are paired with coordinating bumpers to bring life to otherwise drab medical walkers and rollators. Highest-quality materials and 100% made in USA.

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