Have you ever considered that there may be “outside influences” on your behavior or beliefs that you hold that may be preventing you from being successful in making positive behavioral changes? The Consider Outside Influences on Health and Wealth behavioral change strategy helps you think about your past experiences with food and money so that you can make a plan to manage these outside influences. For a quick overview of this strategy listen to a podcast.

To begin thinking about outside influences and beliefs, close your eyes and think of your very first memory of food. Now think about your very first memory of money. Your emotions and childhood experiences can influence your health and personal financial behaviors all through your life. We develop beliefs about health, eating, physical activity, and money from our family and surrounding culture (neighbors, advertising, religion, etc). We might eat the same foods or manage our money like our parents did. Even if our behavior is exactly the opposite of our parents’ (e.g. not smoking in a family of smokers), your parents or others around you had influence.

Things we may have heard growing up include:

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”
“The only certain things in life are death and taxes.”
“Eat your carrots--they’re good for your eyes.”
“You can’t control your bad health genes.”
“Money is the root of all evil.”
“Clean your plate or no dessert.”
“Money doesn’t grow on trees.”
“A moment on your lips, forever on your hips.”

“Yesterday I dared to struggle. Today I dare to win.”
Bernadette Devlin
What are some other outside messages that you may have heard about health or personal finances? Why do you think these messages have stayed with you? It may be because you keep repeating them without thinking them through. The negative ones can hinder you from improving your health and/or your wealth. The positive ones can motivate you to continue what you are doing or to make additional changes.

Once you understand the origins of your outside messages or beliefs about health and money, it is often easier to make behavior changes. How might you change how you respond to these outside messages? Try turning outside negative messages into more positive and motivating health and financial messages. For example, a negative health message might be, “I can’t control my bad health genes.” Turning that into a positive health message would be, “I can improve my health by eating well, being active, and seeing my doctor regularly.” A negative financial message might be, “Money is the root of all evil.” Turning that into a positive financial message would be, “Money is a resource for health and wealth and can be used to do good things for my family and others.”

Complete the Consider Outside Influences on Health and Wealth Worksheet. Reframe negative messages into more positive statements and repeat them to yourself as needed to manage the influences and reinforce making positive behavior changes in your health and wealth.

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