



Why we shop

Understanding the psychology of spending

There are many factors that loosen our purse strings and open our wallets. Knowing what these forces are and keeping them in mind can help you stay on budget – and out of debt.

Advertising: Countless dollars are being spent to understand your buying habits and create a psychological connection between you and a product.

Shopping as Experience: Shopping is no longer simply about buying what you need and leaving; it is now a kind of social event. Studies have shown that most purchases occur in the third hour of shopping which is why malls are designed to keep a shopper there for at least that long.

The Media: Popular television shows and movies display images of “the good life,” a lifestyle that is often way out of line with reality. For most people, attempting to keep up with fictional characters and the possessions they have is a recipe for credit card debt.

The Proliferation of Consumer Goods: Goods and services that used to be luxury items are now more in the financial range of most consumers. This leads to increased spending because everything is “so affordable.”



Society: Unfortunately much of society defines success by what we look like, how much money we make, and what we own. It is not surprising that we are often tempted to buy things that will make us appear wealthier.

Easy Credit: It is far too easy now to borrow money for things we want but can't really afford. It is also easier to obtain credit even when you have “bad” credit history, so people who are already deep in debt can continue to plunge further. Cash advances, “instant checks,” pay-day loans, and high credit limits all contribute to the temptation to overspend.

Tools to overcome overspending

There are many techniques to help even the most entrenched spender transform negative habits into positive behavior:

- Avoid the “hot spots.” If you can't go into a store without making an armload of purchases, don't go in.
- Use lay-away or a store's hold policy to give yourself time to think before you buy.
- Write a shopping list. Make a list of what you need before you leave the house and buy only what's on the list.
- Splurge ... but economically and consciously. The pleasure of saying "yes" to the urge to splurge is the same, whether you're at the Salvation Army or Saks Fifth Avenue.
- Count your money. Know how much you're earning and spending. Where is it going? Are you getting fulfillment for each dollar spent? Are you spending your money in ways that support your values?

Now you don't have to wonder why it is so easy for spending to get out of hand. By understanding these factors you can make conscious and sound shopping decisions. A financial education and counseling service called BALANCE is available to you as a benefit of membership at WECU. Call 888-456-2227 or check out their website - www.balancepro.net. Copyright © 2005 BALANCE

Car sale!

Now is a great time to buy! Thursday through Sunday, May 14-17, 2009 WECU partners with the Bellingham Herald, Industrial Credit Union and up to nine Whatcom County auto dealers to bring you a huge at-dealer auto sale! The sale will take place from 10am-7pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and from 10am-5pm on Sunday. Special financing rates will be available to ICU and WECU members. Every member who purchases a vehicle as a part of the sale qualifies to win the first three payments FREE. (The winner earns first three payments free up to \$500/month or \$1,500 total. Winner must buy a vehicle between the dates of May 11-19, 2009 and be financed by a participating credit union to qualify.) Plus, those who pre-qualify for a loan at WECU or ICU May 5-13 can get a free oil change from a participating dealer. For more details visit <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/autosale>. Participating dealers include: Jerry Chambers, Diehl Ford, Northwest Honda, Rairdon's, Roger Jobs, Smith Kia and Wilson Motors.

Questions to ask if you suspect a scam

- Is the check from an item sold on the Internet such as a car, boat, or jewelry?
- Is the amount of the check more than the item's selling price?
- Did you receive the check via overnight delivery?
- Is the check part of an email transaction/communication?
- Is the check drawn on a business or individual account different from the person buying your item/product?
- Have you been informed that you were the winner of a LOTTERY? Perhaps one located in Canada, Australia, El Gordo, El Mundo or Africa? One you never entered?
- Have you been instructed to WIRE, SEND or SHIP MONEY as soon as possible to a large U.S. city or another country such as Canada, England, Russia, the Netherlands or Nigeria?
- Have you been asked to PAY money to receive a deposit from another country such as Canada, England, Russia, the Netherlands or Nigeria?
- Are you receiving PAY or COMMISSION for facilitating money transfers through your account?
- Did you respond to an email requesting that you CONFIRM, UPDATE or PROVIDE your account information?

Merchant Card Services

Attention WECU business members: great news! WECU has a new, exciting partnership with Merchant Card Services. Merchant Card Services offers the local support, equipment, and supplies you need to help your business succeed.

If you are satisfied with your current merchant processor you do not have to make the switch – you can simply continue as is. However, if you are not pleased with your current service, or would like a competitive quote, please contact Merchant Card Services at 800-900-1946.

At WECU it is our goal to give you the tools you need to keep your business running efficiently and cost-effectively.

Thank you for your support!

For years WECU has been the go-to source for your consumer loan needs. While we have already helped lots of our members with WECU Visas, personal loans or auto loans, many members are now turning to our growing Real Estate department for their real estate needs. Our goal has always been to be a major part of your lives; from your first checking account to your first home, WECU wants to help you realize your financial goals and dreams. Thank you for turning to WECU for your financial needs. Thank you for recommending us to your friends and neighbors!

According to a report from Rocky Mountain Statistics provided to WECU by a local title company, WECU is leading the way in both dollar amount and number of real estate loans in Whatcom County - and it is all because of you! WECU has become the number one real estate lender in the county so far in 2009! Way to go WECU Real Estate!!



Time to get out your two-wheeler



For the 53rd consecutive year the League of American Bicyclists has declared May as National Bike Month, an opportunity to promote bicycling for personal, environmental and community health and

FUN! Bike to Work Week is the 10 - 16th of May, and Bike to Work and School Day is Friday, the 15th of May.

In 2008, the Bike to Work and School crew counted about 7,500 bicycle and walking commuters on Bike to Work and School Day (BTWSD).

If you're pinching your pennies this summer remember that commuting on foot, biking, car-pooling or riding the bus can save you money on gas and car maintenance. And walking or biking to work may even help you stay in shape. As the weather gets progressively nicer take advantage of all of the alternate commute options in Whatcom County! Look for a WECU branch in your neighborhood. You will find bike racks at most of our branches and our Birchwood, Fountain, and Holly branches are on WTA GoLines. For more information about the WTA GoLines or bus routes, visit www.ridewta.com.

Credit Union kids on parade!

Calling all WECU kids: do you want to walk with a group of credit union kids during the Ski to Sea Junior Parade? Join us on May 15th at 4:45 pm in front of La Rue Costume Shop on the corner of Cornwall and Alabama. E-mail your RSVP with your

kids' t-shirt sizes prior to May 8th and WECU will provide t-shirts for your kid(s). If your child would prefer to put together his or her own outfit that is fine too! All participants are encouraged to wear their 'WECU blue' and to get creative as we will be walking with kids from other local credit unions dressed in their credit union colors. RSVP to Kessa.volland@wecu.com and include the number of kids attending, their ages and t-shirt sizes.



HOLIDAY CLOSING

All WECU branches will be closed on Monday, May 25
in observance of Memorial Day.

NON-PROFIT OF THE MONTH

Sustainable Connections



Sustainable Connections (SC) envisions a thriving, collaborative community in which local businesses are prosperous and contribute to a healthy environment and the well-being of all citizens. SC works with local, independently owned businesses that strive for change. They support a community of innovators in green building, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and mentoring a new breed of entrepreneurs who have designed their businesses with a sustainable vision. Today, SC has 550+ local, independently owned business members, a team of nine staff, an Advisory Board of local community and government leaders, a Board of Directors of 12 business owners, and an annual budget of \$500,000. Their programs include Sustainable Business Development, Think Local First, Food and Farming, and Zero Waste & Energy Green Power & Conservation. If you would like to volunteer, get involved or find out more information, please e-mail april@connect.org to receive a monthly e-mail newsletter about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Notice to VISA cardholders

Please be aware that if you allow someone who has not been issued a VISA card on your account to use your card, you will no longer be eligible for VISA's fraud protection because you have compromised the security of your card.

Bring Your Child to Work Day a success!

On April 23, 2009, WECU employees brought their elementary age children to work for the day! A dozen children ranging in age from 5-11 joined us for a day full of WECU education. Our junior employees toured the credit union and learned about WECU jobs, talked about the importance of saving, worked on some fantastic art projects and learned a magic trick or two!

Bring Your Child to Work Day was a great opportunity for staff to celebrate Credit Union Youth Week. During the week of April 20-24, "The Magic of Savings" theme graced our lobbies, encouraging youth to start saving early. WECU is a firm believer that teaching children basic financial education is the key to ensuring a stable financial future - we are proud to take part in credit union youth week every April!



New financial education material at WECU.com

Our partnership with Balance has provided us with some new, quality financial education materials. BalanceTrack's Personal Finance Education Center lesson topics are: Money Management, The World of Credit Reports, Credit Matters, The Road to Home Ownership, Checking Account Management, High Cost Financial Services, Drive Away Happy, Identity Theft, The Basics of Investing, Financial Planning, Teens and Money, and Finances for College Students. Each topic leads you through important financial and consumer concepts. At the end of the lesson, there is a quiz to test your comprehension of the subject.

BalanceTrack's Personal Finance Education Center can be a great tool for a family or an individual. For example, if your child is preparing to open his or her first checking account encourage him or her to read the materials and take the quiz. When first maintaining a checking account the concepts and language can be difficult - this short lesson and quiz can prevent frustrations and fees! In the world of finance a little preparation and study goes a long way in insuring your financial situation is comfortable and improving. The majority of the BalanceTrack topics are currently available in Spanish and many of the youth-specific topics are available as Podcasts. The material can be found at www.wecu.com under financial education.

Details: These free seminars will be presented in the WECU Education Center at 511 East Holly St. in Bellingham, and are open to the public. **Reservations are required.** RSVP online at www.wecu.com [Your CU/Seminars] or call our reservation line at 676.1168, ext. 7000.

Medicare and Disability Income

Wednesday, May 6th, 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Robin Kagan hosts an informative seminar on Medicare and Disability Income. Robin Kagan, a local insurance agent specializing in Long-Term Care for 10 years, will address the ins and outs of Medicare and Disability income and how they can affect your long term care options either at home or in a facility.

But What if I Live? Retirement Seminar

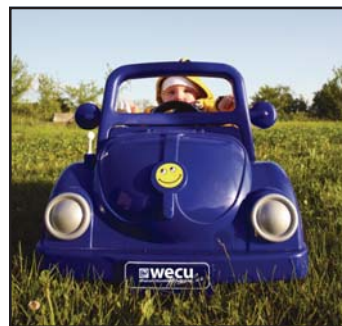
Wednesday, May 20th, 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Based on the book, "*But What if I Live? The American Retirement Crisis*," attendees will get the answers to many of the tough questions about retirement today.

Care Options

Wednesday, June 3rd, 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Many of us will one day find ourselves in the position of needing care for ourselves or a loved one. Luckily there are more resources than ever before. Learn about the services available to seniors in our community, how to access them and how they are paid for as well as what to expect from each type of service. Instructor Debbie Gann has worked in the home health care field for the past 20 years. She is the director of Home Attendant Care, a licensed home care agency; Vice Chair of the Alzheimer Society of Washington; past Secretary of the Washington Private Duty Association and has served as president of Elder Service Providers for three years.



Refinance, baby!

Now is a great time to bring your auto loan from the other place to WECU! With our legendary service and great rates, you'll be in for a smooth ride.

Our vision: Provide the means for members to achieve their dreams.

This credit union is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration.