

# MAKING ENDS MEET

## Money Management Tips for Young Parents

When parents are on a limited budget, it is important to make the most out of available resources. Review the following tips and ideas for stretching your dollars.

- ❖ Many consignment shops offer gently used clothing and baby items, such as strollers and toys, at very reasonable prices.
- ❖ Hand-me downs are great, particularly for play clothes.
- ❖ When you purchase toys, furniture and clothing, evaluate all items carefully and make sure that they are practical and durable. The cutest and most fashionable items are not necessarily the best buys.
- ❖ Purchasing expensive name brand clothing is not a good idea if you're trying to stretch your dollars. Remember, designer labels are not important to infants and toddlers! Usually you can find the same quality of the items in no-name brands.
- ❖ When purchasing toys, make sure that you buy things your child can play with for a long time, like blocks and art supplies. Action figures and other trendy items are often very expensive and short-live.
- ❖ Be creative, particularly when children are younger. Expensive toys are not necessary. For example, a cardboard box and a ball can provide entertainment for hours.
- ❖ If you have difficulty saving money, you may want to put things on layaway. Paying the monthly installments towards a larger purchase is often easier for some people than putting money in the bank.
- ❖ Take advantage of free recreational opportunities. For example, public libraries offer free tickets to museums like the Children's Museum in Boston and the Aquarium. Your local libraries often have on-site activities, such as a children's reading hour, puppet presentations, holiday celebrations, etc.
- ❖ Activities with your child such as a visit to a playground or a stroll in a park are free and a lot of fun.
- ❖ Home cooked meals and snacks are cheaper and much more nutritious than fast food.
- ❖ Comparison shop for all your purchases and use coupons to help you save. Your savings will add up.

- ❖ Conserve electricity, heat and water to save on your utility bills. If you are not sure how to preserve energy, you can contact your local utility company to help you establish a personalized conservation plan.
- ❖ Also, be careful with long distance phone calls and accepting collect calls. Those can add up very quickly. If you are not sure if you can handle these types of calls, you may want to consider putting on a phone block.

### ACTIVITY

*With these tips in mind, consider the following:*

**Leandra** has \$50.00 for the purchase of winter clothing for her one-year-old son, Gregory. He needs a snowsuit, boots, a sweater, a hat, wool socks and gloves. When she arrives at the department store, she finds out that she does not have enough money to purchase all the items she needs. The cheapest snowsuit she can find is \$28.00. Her friend suggests that she may want to go to the consignment shop next door where they have used snowsuits in her son's size for \$10.00 But Leandra states that she doesn't want her son to wear used clothes.

*What would you do in Leandra's situation? Why?*

**Katherine** is on a tight budget and pretty much all her monthly income is planned for. However, her boyfriend who is also the father of her five-month-old daughter, Abigail, calls collect all the time because he lives about 20 miles away and doesn't have any money. Katherine doesn't know what to do. She wants to talk to him and she doesn't want to lose him. But she can't afford to pay for the collect calls.

*What would you do in Katherine's situation? Why?*

**Tiara** has nine-month-old twin daughters and has to budget really carefully to meet the needs of her children. But each time she feels bad about something, she goes shopping and spends her money on stuff she doesn't really need. Now she is in financial trouble and doesn't know what to do.

*What advice would you give Tiara? Why?*

**What about You?**

- ❖ *Can you think of anything that might interfere with your ability to manage your money? If so, describe.*

*Can you think of any strategies that may help you maintain your budget.*