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# Against The Grain

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**September 2012**

## My Take ...

It might be September as you sit there and read this, but it's still August as I write it. And the Olympic Games just ended.

I can't help but watch the Olympics, and it doesn't even matter whether I have any knowledge of or concern for any of the sports. Watching and studying the athletes is what's fascinating to me.

I read recently that the average Olympian has committed about 10,000 hours of their lifetime to training for their Olympic appearance. For some such as 17-year-old American swimmer Missy Franklin, that's about 7 percent of their life. Keep in mind, if you sleep eight hours a night, 33 percent of your time is spent sleeping.

That means training and sleeping make up 40 percent of Missy Franklin's life. Do you know all the things you have to sacrifice to have a life like that? Friends, family, fun — all kinds of things.

And all that time spent, working and sacrificing, it leads to what? For most, a moment or two in front of a crowded stadium and with the rest of the world watching on TV. You have one chance, with the whole world watching, to basically make all that work and sacrifice pay off or, basically, to fail. That is what's called pressure.

And if you watch these world-class athletes, you'll see that the best of them are beyond world-class at whatever it is they perform. You watch their body language, read it in their eyes, hear it in their voices — they are world-class performers under pressure.

Take Jessica Ennis, the British decathlete, who was basically the face of the host country's games. She was under tremendous pressure, and she delivered.

The U.S. men's basketball team, a great collection of talent, was EXPECTED to win gold. The world was watching, and waiting for them to come up short, but they delivered.

Performing under pressure is doing a flip on an inches-wide balance beam when it counts. It's running your top time when you're facing such tough competition that only your best will do. It's needing a perfect dive, and doing it.

Sure, these athletes are blessed with talent far greater than most of us have. To get where they are, they work far harder than we ever will. But what makes them exceptional is that they do their best when the pressure is on. That's something we can *all* strive for.

Have a great month!

*Dan Kaufman*

## Good Night and Sweet Dreams

**The Power of Sleep:** Good sleep is one of the cornerstones of health. **Six to eight hours per night** seems to be the optimal amount of sleep for most adults, and too much or too little can have adverse effects on your health. Sleep deprivation is such a chronic condition these days that you might not even realize you suffer from it. Science has now established that a sleep deficit can have serious, far reaching effects on your health.

For example, interrupted or impaired sleep can:

- **Dramatically weaken your immune system**
- **Accelerate tumor growth**—tumors grow two to three times faster in laboratory animals with severe sleep dysfunctions
- **Cause a pre-diabetic state, making you feel hungry** even if you've already eaten, which can wreak havoc on your weight
- **Seriously impair your memory**; even a single night of poor sleep—meaning sleeping only 4 to 6 hours—can impact your ability to think clearly the next day
- **Impair your performance on physical or mental tasks, and decrease your problem solving**

### Optimize Your Sleep Sanctuary

1. **Sleep in complete darkness, or as close to it as possible.** Even the tiniest glow from your clock radio could be interfering with your sleep. Close your bedroom door, and get rid of night-lights. Refrain from turning on any light at all during the night, even when getting up to go to the bathroom. Cover your windows with blackout shades or drapes.

**Keep the temperature in your bedroom no higher than 70 degrees F.** Studies show that the optimal room temperature for sleep is quite cool, between 60 to 68 degrees. Keeping your room cooler or hotter can lead to restless sleep.

1. **Move alarm clocks and other electrical devices away from your bed.** If these devices must be used, keep them as far away from your bed as possible. *Remove the clock from view.*



It will only add to your worry when you stare at it all night... 2 a.m. ... 3 a.m. ... 4:30 a.m.

**Reserve your bed for sleeping.** If

you are used to watching TV or doing work in bed, you may find it harder to relax and drift off to sleep, so avoid doing these activities in bed

### Suggestions to Enhance Sleep

- Go to bed as early as possible.
- Establish a bedtime routine and don't change your bedtime...even on the weekends.
- Don't drink any fluids within 2 hours of going to bed and go to the bathroom before going to bed.
- Avoid before-bed snacks, especially grains and sugars.
- Take a hot bath or shower before bed.
- Wear socks to bed...usually the feet are the first to feel cold and may wake you from sleep.
- Wear an eye mask to block out light.
- No TV right before bed, instead try listening to relaxation CD's or soft music.
- Read something spiritual or uplifting.
- Write in your gratitude journal.

Article By Dr. Krystal Czegus with Clear Connections

Chiropractic

Our approach is simple. We believe that health is among our most valuable possessions, so it is our goal to provide you and your family with the highest quality of corrective and wellness chiropractic care available so that you can enjoy an active, healthy life. Make sure to check out our website at [www.clearconnectionschiropractic.com](http://www.clearconnectionschiropractic.com)

**Furniture finishing** doesn't have to be complicated or mysterious. That's not to say that even experienced finishers don't run into problems from time to time; everybody does. But there are ways to make the outcome of your project finishing a lot more predictable and therefore less frustrating. Here's five ways to get good finishing results with the least amount of trouble.

**1. Learn how to do three different types of finishes.** Unless you build only one kind of project, you'll need to know a couple different types of finishes so you can choose the appropriate finish for the project you're working on. For example, a Shaker-style project will look fine with an easy-to-apply oil finish. But an oil finish would not look right on a more sophisticated project where a film-forming finish like polyurethane, shellac, varnish or lacquer would be better suited.

These film-forming finishes offer more protection but can have a steeper learning curve to use them successfully. For that reason, you should choose one of them and learn how to use it. It doesn't matter whether you apply it with a brush, or spray it on. Just choose one finish material and stick with it until you have it down.

**2. Learn how to color wood, and which woods like stains or dyes and which ones don't.** Many woods, even the finest ones, take stain or dye evenly and look better when colored, like mahogany and walnut. No, you don't want to bury the beauty of the grain or under a dark layer of stain, but color can often enhance grain and make the wood look warmer and more beautiful. There are many fine woods that don't take color well at all, like cherry, maple and birch. And for my money, very open-pored plain-sliced red oak looks awful when stained. Of course there are no softwoods that take stain well at all. All these woods blotch when color is applied and look terrible. Coloring wood is probably the most tricky part of finishing and the most artistic. It takes time to learn but well worth the effort. Or, wet sand your film finish starting with 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper. You can use water with a few drops of dish detergent for wet sanding. But wet or dry just be careful to not sand through the film, especially if you have stained the work.

**3. Know your finish before you start the project.** Let the project style and the finish guide in choosing the right wood to use. Will it be stained? Will it be a simple oil finish or a film finish? How much protection does the wood need from moisture or scratches?

**4. Make a sample, make a sample, make a sample.** Unless your ragging on an oil finish, take the time to make a sample board from the same material as you are using in your project. When you make the sample, prepare the wood in the same way as you will for the project. Sand it with the same sandpaper grit progression and ending with the same grit for the final sanding. Make notes if you need to. Apply color if your finish calls for it. Stain or dye a section of board, let it dry, then apply your top coat leaving some of the board with just the stain. When it comes time to finish your project you'll have a representative sample of each step of the process. And needless to say, if you don't like the results of your sample, make another sample until get what you're looking for.

**5. Sand between coats.** If your goal is smooth finish, learn to sand between coats to remove the small "nibs" the inevitably show up. These may be grain standing up after the first coat is applied, or dust that falls into the wet finish or air bubbles that "pop" after the wet finish starts to dry and don't lay out smooth. You can sand dry finishes with 240-grit steared, self lubricating aluminum oxide paper (usually grey colored)

We have many articles for free on the finer points of these finishing techniques right here on the *Popular Woodworking* web site. Many are written by noted finishing expert Bob Flexner. We also have several great books by Bob in our online store like "Wood Finishing 101," or "Flexner on Finishing." You might also select a full length video I made on finishing called "The 10 Commandments of Finishing." It shows you the techniques described above and more.

—Steve Shanesy

I hope you found this article helpful. If you would like some hands-on help on finishing furniture make sure to check our our upcoming classes on Furniture Repair & Refinishing at: [www.woodmenders.com/classes](http://www.woodmenders.com/classes)

Source - [http://www.popularwoodworking.com/article/five-furniture-finishing-tips?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%2A+PopularWoodworking+%28Popular+Woodworking%29](http://www.popularwoodworking.com/article/five-furniture-finishing-tips?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%2A+PopularWoodworking+%28Popular+Woodworking%29)

# Strategies for Rebuilding the Wealth We Lost

In last month's newsletter, we took a look at how and why so much wealth was lost in the United States during the financial crisis of the late 2000s.

The numbers can be described as "staggering," with the combined loss of Americans' net worth in the trillions of dollars. According to some estimates, it was as high as \$12 trillion.

A lot of the loss was blamed on a pretty-much-unprecedented drop in real estate values. Traditionally, of course, much of Americans' wealth has been directly attributed to the equity in their homes. When that equity drops substantially, so does a person's net worth.

But it wasn't JUST falling home values that sent net worth downward. Retirement accounts, stocks, bonds, other securities, etc. also lost value.

Although some of the value of these asset classes has returned, we are still feeling the affects of lost wealth. Now, we can feel sorry for ourselves, complain about how unfair it all is and moan about long we'll have to work before retiring.

Or we can roll our sleeves up and get back to work rebuilding the wealth we lost.

Personally, I'm for the second option. I've never been a fan of complaining or feeling sorry for myself, and I've never been afraid of getting to work when I have to.

Of course, some of us have more work to do than others. For example, if your net worth dropped because the equity in your home dropped, imagine the real estate investor who has five homes, ten homes or more. If you're a 40-year-old whose retirement account took a 40-percent hit, imagine the 50-year-old who went



through the same thing. Depending on where your money was during the crisis and how long you want to give yourself to rebuild, everybody who's rebuilding might not go about it the same way. But there certainly are specific strategies for wealth-building that all of us might consider.

First, we must realize that not all of the lost wealth can be attributed to lost equity in our homes. If you recall from last month's article, in fact, a CNN report based on U.S. Census Bureau data revealed that less than 60 percent of ALL lost wealth was attributable to lost real estate equity. CNN reported that stock and mutual fund investments dropped by 33 percent for the average American, and home equity dropped by 28 percent.

In other words, there were more than one way Americans lost their wealth in the financial crisis. In a way, that's good news — it means there are more ways than one to re-build lost wealth.

And keep in mind as we go through some possible ways to do this, that most wealth-builders who have lost wealth and had to re-build it say that it's easier to do the second time. I would bet that there would be plenty of wealthy types who would say that is could very well be easier for just about anybody right now. The opportunities are there. So let's look at the strategies we can implement to rebuild our wealth.

## **Increase income**

According to the U.S. Federal Reserve, the average U.S. household income dropped 8 percent

between 2007 and 2010. You could argue that this is perhaps as big a wealth-sucker — or will be in the long run — as a loss in real estate equity. There are several reasons.

One, if you lose 8 percent of your income, you're going to feel it. If not in your household budget, than at least in your savings. If you keep expenses the same, you'd have less money to save.

For a household making \$100,000 a year, that's \$8,000 less you can save and earn interest on or invest in securities that provide better returns.

An income loss of \$8,000 per year for just 3 years (\$24,000) would be a loss of over \$60,000 if compounded at a moderate 5 percent a year for 20 years. If you want to rebuild wealth, the best way might be just to increase income.

Aside from your own saving/investing, increasing salary will also increase your retirement account, both by the additional money you'll be contributing, and because of an employer's match.

For some, increasing income could simply mean switching jobs. For others, it might mean taking a second, part-time job. But the need to increase your income could be the perfect motivation needed to finally start that "side" business you've thought about.

A side business that generates extra income without costing a ton of time is the ideal one. To use it to genuinely to re-build your wealth, commit to putting all the extra income into savings or investments.

Remember, for the most part, you won't be able to control the value of the assets you hold. You CAN, however, increase your income in order to acquire more assets.

### **Fill the cash coffers**

You know what's worse than a terrible recession? A second one during the recovery.

It's the same with personal finances; the worst thing that could happen to your net worth during a rebuild is to have the same thing happen again.

You can't control the markets, but you CAN con-

trol your fate by being better prepared for a blow to the value of your assets. The best way to do this is to keep some of your net worth in cash.

The temptation, of course, is to avoid cash, simply because cash pays interest at dismal rates right now. And while it's true that more aggressive investments will help rebuild your net worth faster, having adequate cash could help you withstand another blow the world deals you.

Many people had to go to their retirement accounts or take on debt because they didn't have the cash to deal with drops in income during the recession. A goal is to aim for an emergency savings account of one year's salary, but any emergency fund helps.

As you're rebuilding wealth, it's better to have cash to fix a roof or a car or supplement unemployment than it is to withdraw money from a retirement account that's earning a better rate.

As your income increases, commit a portion of it to cash. It will help you deal with another setback should it occur during rebuilding.

### **Take control**

A self-directed IRA can be a good way to rebuild wealth because it would allow you to invest in things — such as real estate or private businesses — that might earn better returns than a traditional IRA.

A self-directed IRA (you must set one up with a qualified intermediary) could be used to take advantage of the low real estate prices of today. The gain a rehabber would net on a completed project, would go into the account. The monthly cash flow a rental property generates would be paid to the IRA on a regular basis.

This would allow you to control your retirement nest egg while also enjoying some tax benefits and possibly avoiding other management costs.

As you can probably see, there are things you can control during your wealth rebuild, and that's a big key. It helps you reduce risk and/or be aggressive, while guarding against another setback. Be smart and patient, and you'll rebuild what was lost and then some.

## Chicken, Hairdos the New Smoke and Mirrors

There's a motivational saying that started somewhere that goes "Don't sweat the small stuff...and it's all small stuff."

The intention is fine and well-meaning. But it's not always true. Sometimes, it's not all small stuff.

I'd argue that a national unemployment rate of more than 8 percent is not "small stuff." I'd say that a housing situation in which people are still losing homes to foreclosure and having trouble qualifying for new loan standards isn't small stuff. I'd tell you that the national debt, social security future, wars in multiple countries, and an obesity epidemic all qualify, in fact, as "big stuff."

Usually, issues such as these are addressed to no end when it's a presidential election year. Typically, presidential elections tend to make big stuff into REALLY big stuff.

But this year, it's chicken sandwiches and hairdos.

The Olympic games just passed, a memorable couple of weeks for international sports to say the least. One of the biggest stories for the U.S. was Gabby Douglas. The 16-year-old gymnast helped the U.S. to team gold and became the first African-American to ever win a gold medal in the all-around competition.

What was all over the media afterward? Stories about her hair. Yes, her hair.

People took to social media sites and criticized her hairdo, the most common sentiment being that her ponytail was kind of unkempt. Google "Gabby Douglas hair," and you'll get more than 44 million results. Articles popped up on news sites around the globe, and her mom did interviews explaining/defending her daughter's hair.

The all-around gold was big stuff. With all the attention on her hair, I'd say it was the small stuff that's being sweated. If you make history, and the result is your mom being interviewed about who does your hair and why it looks the way it does, there's something wrong.



There's also something wrong with choosing where to eat a chicken sandwich based on what politically or religiously motivated blowhards say about it.

It doesn't matter what you believe about who can marry whom — to be expected to take a stand on your chicken sandwich because the guy who owns Chik-Fil-A believes a certain way is kind of ridiculous.

More ridiculous is the media attention the whole thing was given. Guess what? There are probably a lot of wealthy guys giving a lot of money to causes you don't agree with. For this to be the one thing — boycotting or honoring chicken sandwiches, for goodness sake — that people use to take a stand is mind-boggling.

Unemployment, housing, etc., all the big stuff, was forgotten about for several weeks because we as a society let ourselves be distracted by chicken sandwiches. Do you know where your party stands on key economic issues, such as housing? Maybe not, but you certainly know where it stands on chicken joints.

It's like we're all members of the audience at some magic act. Magicians, you know, do something with this hand over here, so that you can't see what the other hand is doing over there. It was magic acts that helped formulate the phrase "smoke and mirrors." These days, it seems we let ourselves be easily tricked by similar devices, when we should perhaps be sweating the bigger stuff. Don't let yourself be distracted.

### They Said It:

“He who is of calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, but to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden.”

**Plato**

“Everything negative — pressure, challenges — is all an opportunity for me to rise.”

**Kobe Bryant**

“There is a lot of pressure put on me, but I don't put a lot of pressure on myself. I feel if I play my game, it will take care of itself.”

**LeBron James**

“No pressure, no diamonds.”

**Thomas Carlyle**

“The pressure of adversity does not affect the mind of the brave man... It is more powerful than external circumstances.”

**Lucious Annaeus Seneca**

“I don't think I will be less good because there's less pressure on me.”

**Emily Watson**

“When the pressure comes, preferences give way while convictions hold firm.”

**Edwin Louis Cole**



*Photo by Diario de un pixel*

## Rent a Heavenly House... from the ‘Prince of Darkness’

The guy way down under might preside over that fiery pit, but another “Prince of Darkness” is landlord of a more earthly domain.

Heavy metal rocker **Ozzy Osbourne** and his wife, **Sharon**, are reportedly trying to rent their home after failing to sell it.

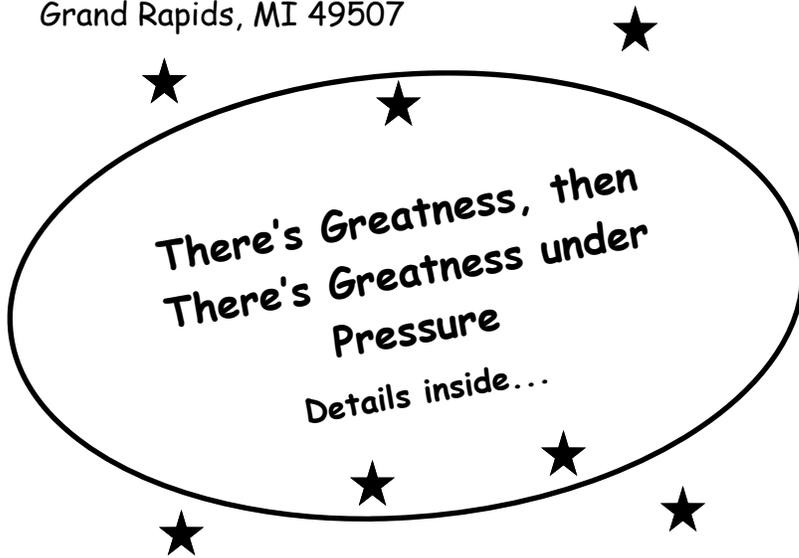
According to Trulia.com, the Hidden Hills, Calif., estate is available for \$50,000 per month. The Osbourne's joined the ranks of sellers-turned-landlords in August, having tried unsuccessfully to sell the house since July of 2011. It's still listed for sale at \$12,999,000.

The rock legend and his wife purchased the home in 2007 and paid \$12,388,500. It's not

the home their reality TV series, “The Osbournes,” was filmed in, but it does boast nearly 11,000 square feet, six bedrooms and 10 bathrooms. It sits on a 2.25-acre chunk of property in an exclusive gated community with city and mountain views, according to Trulia. You know, in case you want to fork over \$50,000 to spend a month with Ozzy as your landlord.

The Beverly Hills mansion the family lived in during the MTV reality-show years is now owned by fellow musical artist **Christina Aguilera**. Maybe bad real estate luck follows the Prince of Darkness, because Aguilera has had *that* home on the market since March of 2011 and hasn't been able to sell it.

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