

Live and Let Learn

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who thought stuffed animals were the most spectacular thing in the world this side of ice cream. She would take the two dollars she earned every week and she would set the bills aside, impatiently but hopefully waiting for the day when she saved up enough money to purchase her next toy. One day, she was at the mall with her family, and she spotted a stuffed husky that she decided she just had to have, but when she checked her wallet and counted her money, she discovered she didn't quite have enough to pay for it; she was only two dollars short. So she turned to her mother and asked if she would cover the extra two dollars, promising she would pay her mother back as soon as she had the money. This little girl couldn't have been any older than ten, and yet she went into debt for the first—and last—time. Yes, she got the plush dog and was as happy as could be; yes, she paid off the two dollars once she had the money, but she soon regretted the decision because if she had waited for one more week, she would have found that there was another stuffed animal she wanted even more than the husky. She was extremely disappointed, and she wished she had listened more to her mother when she was being asked if buying the dog was what she really wanted to do.

I can't laugh and shake my head at the ignorance of the little girl because the little girl is me. I did indeed "go into debt" just to get the stuffed animal I wanted. Maybe it wasn't a substantial amount of debt, but it was still debt, and I can't help but be disappointed in myself when I look back on that day. I'm eighteen years old now, and I need money for college, car repairs, a laptop for school, and any other extra expenses that come with growing up. On one hand, I wish my parents had been stricter on childhood me; I wish they had stopped me from wasting all of my money on toys, but at

the same time, I'm glad they didn't. I've become much more frugal with my money, but I don't think I would be the saver that I am today if I hadn't learned the hard way how to decide what is important enough to spend my money on and what isn't. Do I regret spending dozens of weekly allowances on stuffed animals? Of course I do. What I don't regret is the lesson I learned along the way, and I know that lesson will stick with me for the rest of my life, guiding me and shaping me into a person who can be at financial peace.

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