

Center for Consumer Credit Counseling
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March 2005 Newsletter

Free Credit Reports

March 1, 2005 residents of the Midwest will be able to request a free copy of their credit report from the three credit reporting agencies.

You will be able to request a report from each agency (TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian) but one combine report from all agencies is not available.

Your credit score will not be listed on the free credit report. If you want to know your credit score, you will need to

pay a fee for the score.

You can request your report online at www.annualcreditreport.com or by phone at 877-322-8228. One word of caution is to make sure you use the website above. A quick search on free credit report brings up many sites claiming to send you a free credit report. Be careful of who you give this information to because it could be used for identity theft.

When you receive your report, there should be a brochure or pamphlet that will explain your report to you. If you are confused, contact CCCC and we can set up an appointment to explain your report to you. If you know someone who is not a client and would like counseling, there will be a \$15.00 fee. However, as a valued client of CCCC this service is free for you!



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The Coupon Trap

Well, I did it again. I cut coupons and bought things I didn't need. All because I had a coupon.

Here's what happened.

A few week's ago I purchased the Sunday Sioux City Journal and was looking at the sale ads. That's when it hit me — the Source Saver. Now, I really want to be a person who saves money by using coupons. What usually happens is that I cut them and they expire in my purse.

Today was going to be different! I was going to cut the coupons and go straight to the

store to use them.

First I started by cutting only the coupons that I needed but then I started seeing Save \$1.00 save \$.75 and I was hooked. After a flurry of paper and scissors I was ready to go to the store.

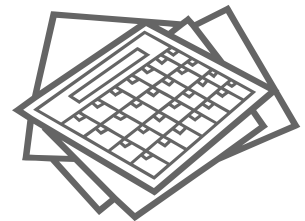
I organized my coupons so that I could make sure that I got everything that I needed. It took me awhile to find all of the products but I persevered and found them. I was ready to go. Racing to the checkout I proudly handed them my coupons. After hearing the blip of each coupon being scanned I found



that I had save over \$10 on my purchases. I was feeling really good about myself — I saved money — I beat the system!

Once I got home the reality set in. I bought products that (A) I didn't need and (B) I didn't like. Now, I'm not feeling so good. I can't take them back because that would be admitting defeat.

So, as I work my way through all of those products I have a constant reminder to not fall into the coupon trap again!



Important Dates:

- ♦ March 21, 10:00 CCCC Office — Credit When Credit Is Due
- ♦ March 30 9:00—10:00 CCCC Closed for Staff Meeting

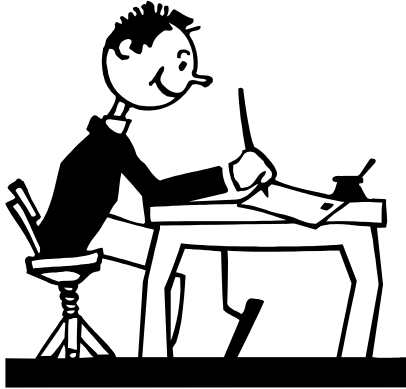


Client Letter

Dear CCCC of Greater Siouxland:

I would appreciate it very much if you would share my comments with Don Demaree, my counselor, and any of your client you feel might benefit from my experiences. Don has been such a lifesaver for me! His counseling, his calm demeanor, his encouragement have been such a balm for my "credit card tortured life:!"

I called CCCS in April of 2003, the day before I had an appointment with a bankruptcy attorney. Don convinced me to cancel that appointment so that we would have time to survey my situation and see what kind of solution was possible. When I entered into my agreement with CCCS, I had balances on 14 credit cards totaling approximately \$25,000.00. I personally could not see the light at the end of the tunnel but I knew something had to change. Making all these accounts going nowhere FAST! But bankruptcy just didn't feel right for me. I knew I had incurred this debt and I knew that I needed to repay it. I just needed someone to help me thought the "Credit card maze" and Don was that person!



As of February of this year, I will owe balances on only 5 cards and my total outstanding debt will have been reduced by about \$10,000.00 — and all this in only a year and 9 months! The progress has been amazing and I just cannot say enough how much I appreciate Don's counsel and encouragement!

I have shared your address and phone number with several other individuals who are also struggling with credit card debt and who may have had bad experiences with other organizations claiming to be able to solve all their problems. Don never claimed to be the one who would "save me" from drowning — he simply encouraged ME to reclaim control of MY finances and helped me draw up a plan to do just that!

I want everyone to know that CCC will help individuals who are struggling with debt, but the ones who are struggling must also be READY for that help! It's not "magic" that has caused my debt to disappear — it has involved hard work and much belt tightening on my part. But Don has been there for me every step of the way, dealing with my creditors, talking me through rough patches, and I appreciate it more than I'll ever be able to say!

Your Friend Forever