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# Workers' COMPanion

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## An Unforgettable Memory (and the Pictures to Prove It!)

### *The Snowy Night I Became a Dad and the World Shifted*

I'm always one to look for "unique" holidays, and lo and behold, Jan. 19 is Good Memory Day. So, if we're talking about good memories, the one that immediately comes to mind isn't from the courtroom or any big professional victory, but it's from a hospital room on a snowy February night in 1994. That's when my first child, my son Max, was born. And let me tell you, nothing quite prepares you for the paradigm shift that happens when you go from responsible adult to responsible-for-another-human adult.



It was one of those icy winter days where the roads had us slipping and sliding our way to the hospital. By the time my wife and I got there, she was already miserable. I was doing my best to be the supportive husband, which apparently meant walking her up and down hospital halls for hours while she gave me

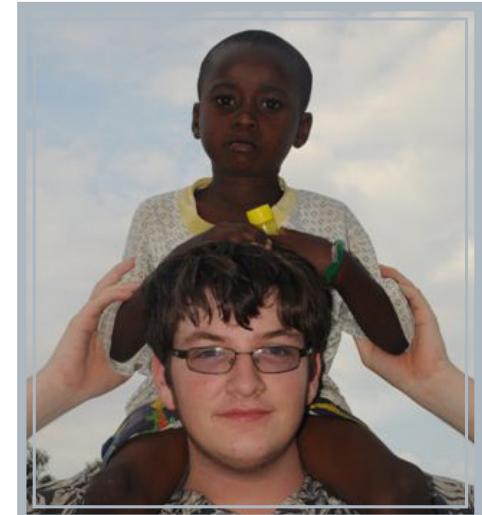
death stares that could've melted the snow outside. If looks could kill, I'd have been a goner by noon.

Her labor stretched into the next morning, and by then she was absolutely exhausted. The nurses kept checking in, asking how she was doing, and from under her blanket, I'd hear this pained groan just begging for more meds, and I couldn't blame her one bit.

Eventually, things weren't progressing, and the doctor decided it was time for a C-section. They suited me up in full hospital gear: blue gown, cap, booties, the whole nine yards. And yes, I brought a camera, a 35mm Canon to be exact, because this was 1994, long before we could take 700 blurry photos of the same event on our phones. I was snapping pictures like I was covering a war zone with the bright blues of the gowns, the red of the blood, the orange tint of the iodine. Looking back, those photos are... graphic. Let's just say they're more National Geographic than baby announcement material.

But when they lifted Max up and I saw that full head of dark hair, it was like the world shifted. Suddenly, all the chaos and exhaustion fell away, replaced by an overwhelming sense of wonder and, if I'm being honest, slight alarm. Holding him for the first time, I remember thinking, "Okay, this is it. I'm officially responsible for keeping another person alive." We'd successfully kept plants alive, and a few pets, so I suppose this was the logical next step.

Anxieties aside, once Max arrived, I couldn't imagine life without him. When I think back on



that night, I realize it changed everything in the quiet, steady way life has of sneaking up on you. One minute, you're pacing hospital halls trying to look useful, and the next, you're holding a tiny human who somehow makes every late night and bad day feel worth it.

I've had plenty of proud moments since then, but none that hit quite the same way as that first moment of holding Max. It was humbling, really. Suddenly, all the things I used to think were important shrank a little, and the things that actually mattered came sharply into focus.

That's the beauty of a good memory like that one. It doesn't fade; it just settles in, becomes part of who you are. Even now, decades later, I can still see that snowy night, hear his first cry, and feel that strange mix of joy, fear, and awe.

And every year around this time, I'm reminded that some memories don't just stay with you, but they keep shaping you, quietly reminding you what really matters.

*- Jim Monast*

# The Expensive Side of 'Yes'

## FOMO FUELS OVERSPENDING

We all know the feeling: A friend posts that dreamy beach photo, someone's heading to a music festival, or you see the perfect brunch video pop up on your feed, and suddenly there's this itch, "What did I miss out on?" That whisper has a name: FOMO, or the fear of missing out, and when it nudges you to open your wallet, it becomes FOMO spending.

FOMO spending is when the urge to partake in experiences like concerts, travel, and social getaways overrides your financial boundaries. It's not just about wanting "stuff"; it's about wanting in. The problem is that those desires often come with a huge price tag.

Studies suggest this isn't just anecdotal. Empower's research found that 51% of Americans admit they've made purchases or investments sparked

by FOMO, with many pointing to experiences like dining out and traveling. When social media becomes a nonstop highlight reel, we compare ourselves and our bank accounts to a filtered ideal.

The stakes are real. The 2019 Modern Wealth Survey sponsored by Charles Schwab revealed that more than a third of Americans admit their spending is influenced by what friends are doing, often leading them to exceed their means. In an experimental study, researchers found that FOMO significantly increased the likelihood of impulse purchases even with budget constraints in place. That tells us FOMO isn't just temptation; it's a powerful nudge against rational behavior.

Experiences are powerful. They build memories, foster connections, and bring joy. But when every experience becomes "must-do," the balance

breaks. You end up chasing the next event, trip, or spending spree, and your long-term goals take a back seat. You might skip saving, rack up credit card debt, or delay retirement goals all in pursuit of that next "memorable" moment.

Here's the catch: Living for the moment is fine until that moment's price tag pushes your future out of reach. The challenge is to be intentional. Deciding where you should spend your energy (and money) gives you permission to skip the rest. The thrill of one impulsive decision fades fast; the peace of financial security lasts.

If FOMO is the voice telling you to just go for it, try asking yourself: *Will I thank myself in five years for this?* Strike a balance between living fully today and protecting tomorrow. That's how you stop FOMO from bankrupting your joy.

## Don't Let Winter Put You Out of Work

### WINTER WORK DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN WINTER INJURIES

It's no surprise that when snow falls and temperatures plummet, workplace injuries spike. Slippery sidewalks, icy steps, heavy winter gear, and shorter daylight hours all create hazards that employers and employees can't afford to ignore. Delivery drivers, warehouse staff, and outdoor workers face the highest risks, and winter's chill can turn even routine tasks into dangerous situations. While winter brings a rise in workers' compensation claims, many of these accidents are preventable with the right precautions.

#### The Most Common Winter Injuries

From November to March, injuries from slips, trips, and falls increase significantly. Employees can get seriously hurt when navigating icy parking lots, entryways, or loading docks. Additionally, snow and slush make moving heavy packages or equipment far more hazardous, and for those on the roads, and icy pavement can increase the likelihood of accidents. For outdoor workers, cold stress illnesses like frostbite, hypothermia, and trench foot can lead to serious medical issues or long-term disability if left untreated.

#### How to Protect Yourself

Winter injuries can often be prevented with simple, proactive steps:

- *Keep walkways and parking lots clear of ice and snow, and apply salt or ice melt regularly.*
- *Wear proper footwear with slip-resistant soles to reduce falls.*
- *Dress in layers to stay warm while maintaining mobility, including moisture-wicking inner layers.*
- *Stretch and warm up before starting your shift, especially when working outdoors or lifting heavy objects.*
- *Follow safe driving practices for icy or snowy roads, including planning routes ahead of storms.*
- *Post caution signs near slippery areas and maintain dry, safe entryways inside buildings.*



#### What to Do if You're Injured

If an accident occurs, take action immediately. Report the injury to your supervisor, seek medical attention, and document the incident with photos and witness statements. Filing a workers' compensation claim promptly is paramount, and an experienced attorney can help if your claim is disputed or delayed.

If you've been injured on the job this season, our team at Monast Law Office is ready to guide you through the workers' compensation process and make sure you get the support you deserve.

# BRIGHT IDEAS SAVE SEA TURTLES

## ONE LIGHT-UP NET AT A TIME

Sea turtles face numerous dangers in our oceans, from climate change to habitat loss, but one of the most pressing threats is getting caught in fishing gear. In places like coastal North Carolina, conservation laws made to protect these animals have hit local fishermen hard. "It shut down the gillnetting here and there was a lot of people dependent on that," Eddie Willis, a fourth-generation fisherman, told Arizona State University. "It put a lot of people out of work. A lot of people."

Finding ways to protect wildlife while also supporting fishermen hasn't been easy. That's where Jesse Senko and his team at Arizona State University's Senko Lab come in. They work directly with local fishers to make fishing gear safer for sea turtles, sharks, and other at-risk species. "From the very beginning, we ask: How can we actually improve the way their fishing goes? It's not just about saving sea turtles. It's about how we can improve their fishing operations and preserve their livelihoods."

Innovation often comes from unexpected places, and this one came from a simple idea in Mexico's Sea of Cortez. Local fishermen Juan Pablo Cuevas Amador and Felipe Cuevas Amador suggested lighting up the nets. The results were astonishing. Illuminating the nets with green LED solar-powered lights *reduced sea turtle entanglement by 63%* and even helped fishers save time retrieving and disentangling their gear without affecting

their harvest. "The results were pretty exciting," Senko said. "It's a win-win in the sense that you're getting a light that lasts significantly longer, and it also seems to reduce bycatch just as effectively as lights that require replaceable batteries."

Even with this success, the team isn't stopping. Senko hopes to make the nets affordable for small boats and improve the design to reduce turtle entanglements even more. "A 63% reduction in sea turtle bycatch is a magnificent starting point. However, there's no reason why that can't be improved, right? My goal is: How do we get that 63% reduction to a 95% reduction?"

With collaboration, creativity, and determination, scientists and fishers alike are proving that protecting endangered species and sustaining communities can go hand in hand. The oceans may face challenges, but innovative solutions like these give hope for a brighter, safer future for sea turtles.



# SUDOKU

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ANSWER

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### EATS WITH ELLIE JALAPEÑO POPPER SOUP

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 bacon slices, chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 5–6 large jalapeño peppers, minced with stems and seeds removed
- 1/2 small onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 lb gold potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 8 oz full-fat cream cheese
- 1 cup shredded fresh cheddar cheese
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

#### DIRECTIONS

- Place a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy, then remove to a plate.
- Add jalapeños and onion to the pot and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Add garlic to the pot and sauté for 1 minute.
- Stir in chicken broth, cumin, salt, and potatoes, and simmer for 20 minutes.
- Place cream cheese in a mixing bowl and add 1 ladle of hot broth before mixing.
- Add cream cheese mixture to the pot and stir.
- Remove from heat and add cheddar cheese and lemon juice, stirring until the cheese melts.
- Pour into serving bowls, topping with bacon and more shredded cheese.

*Inspired by TheRecipeCritic.com*

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## HOW TO REFER US A CASE

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# Ditch the Quick Fix

ENERGIZE NATURALLY WITH SIMPLE DAILY HABITS

It's 3 p.m., and you've hit the dreaded midday slump. For many Americans, coffee or an energy drink may fuel their second wind. When tired, we tend to turn to external sources for a boost, but it's a temporary fix; we'll encounter the same issue the next day. Instead, we need to look internally and make changes to improve overall well-being for the long term. A healthier, more consistent way to increase energy is possible!

Do you stay up late every night? Do you use your phone right before you fall asleep? Do you have trouble waking up in the morning? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it's time to give your sleep a facelift. Try to go to bed at the same time every night, ideally around 9 or 10 p.m. Put your phone away at least an hour before bed. If this is difficult, practice meditation whenever you feel tempted to grab your phone.

Your diet may also need adjustments. If you skip meals, eat junk food, or snack right before bed, you'll feel it later. During the day, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and nutrient-rich foods instead. Make time for every meal, stepping away from your work while you eat. If you do not get enough nutrients, supplement your diet with vitamins.

Consider your daily movement as well. It might sound counterproductive, but exercise can substantially boost our energy. Exercise improves oxygen and nutrient circulation while allowing us to get better sleep.

You don't have to go through life lacking energy. Make adjustments today for a more energized tomorrow.

