



Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

January 2016

Managing your money in times of change

This time of year, lots of people are thinking about how they're going to pay the bills. What felt like open-hearted generosity a few weeks ago now shows up as hard, cold numbers in a credit card statement. For others, it may be a new year but they're facing the same old money worries. At any time of year, if you're worried about losing a job — or finding a new one — money issues can be overwhelming.

In fact, according to a survey by the American Psychological Association, the top three sources of stress for Americans are money, work and the economy.¹ Many of life's challenges can affect finances. Losing a job, going through a divorce or getting back on your feet after a health scare may mean a loss of income and/or increased expenses.²

To get a handle on money worries, the American Psychological Association suggests you identify what's causing stress. Thinking about these pain points may be, well, painful, in the short term. But it allows you to make a plan and commit to it, which helps reduce stress in the long run.³ Besides, if you don't face up to money worries now, they'll probably get worse before they get better.

Assess your situation

Your financial net worth is a measurement of your status at a given point in time. This involves adding up your total assets and the total amount you owe. Assets may include cash, money in the bank and personal possessions. Examples of what you may owe include mortgage, student loans and other debt. You can find net-worth worksheets online, including one created by extension.org, at the link noted below,⁴ under the references section.

Rainy-day resources

If a rainy day has arrived, what financial resources do you have? These are things you would list under assets. Money in a checking or savings account can be easily made into cash. You also may have items you could sell to

tide you over. For instance, selling a car, boat or motorcycle would bring in some money, but that might take some time.

What are your personal resources, including skills, education and experience, that might be useful in earning income? Be sure to explore the resources available at liveandworkwell.com, under WorkWell, for help with career planning and skill building.

Managing expenses

You may need to decide which bills take priority. Mortgage and rent payments are probably the most important. If you rely on your car to look for or keep a job, those payments are also a priority. Some creditors will work with you. So if you know your payment will be late or you're going to miss a payment, call and let them know. They may be willing to work out a payment plan you can manage.⁷

If possible, try to see tough times as a chance to take stock of what's important and make positive changes. Sharing your money worries and hopes for the future can bring you closer to your spouse. Try to stay focused and positive, and reach out for help if you need it.

Stress with a capital \$

When times get tough, some of us turn to unhealthy habits like smoking, drinking, gambling or emotional eating. All of these activities can take a toll on health, relationships and finances. Find healthier, less expensive and more effective ways to deal with stress. These include getting enough sleep and exercising regularly.⁶

Upcoming Articles

February 2016
Preventing a heart attack (even if you've already had one)

March 2016
The link between sleep and health. Fewer z-z-z-z-z's could mean more lbs

Another helpful tool from extension.org is the Monthly Spending Plan worksheet. This helps you create a new budget based on a change in income. You can view your income and expenses in side-by-side columns that give a clear picture of where adjustments need to be made. Are there other sources of income? Have you applied for unemployment compensation? For expenses, can you cut back on clothing or entertainment?

Look at your total adjusted monthly income. If it doesn't at least equal your total adjusted monthly expenses, you'll have to decide where you can cut back on expenses. Don't wait to take action. Prolonged financial stress can be emotionally draining and can literally make you sick. Take care of your emotional and physical health during tough times.

Monthly Spending Plan Worksheet

Monthly Spending Plan Worksheet ⁵	Before income was reduced	Adjusted amount
Your income (take-home pay)		
Salary, wages		
Unemployment compensation		
Other		
Total monthly income		
Monthly expenses		
Housing (mortgage or rent payment)		
Utilities (electric, gas, phone)		
Food (at home and away)		
Transportation (gas, car repairs)		
Medical care (doctor, dentist, hospital)		
Credit payments (loans, credit cards)		
Insurance (life, health, car, home, etc.)		
Household expenses and repairs		
Cleaning, laundry supplies, etc.		
Clothing and personal care		
Education		
Recreation		
Childcare		
Other (gifts, allowances)		
Savings and/or funds set aside for seasonal expenses		
Total monthly expenses		

Resources

www.liveandworkwell.com

Under LiveWell, click on Financial Fitness for access to timely articles, calculators and tools, and resources for helping manage debt.

Ask your health benefits representative for your access code to liveandworkwell.com.

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1 American Psychological Association, Stress in America. Released February 11, 2014. www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/stress-report.pdf, p. 31.

2 Extension. Sizing up your financial situation. <http://www.extension.org/pages/17955/sizing-up-your-financial-situation>

3 Managing your stress in tough economic times. American Psychological Association. Nov. 2010. www.apa.org/helpcenter/economic-stress.aspx

4 Visit www.extension.org/pages/17966/making-the-most-of-what-you-have. Extension is an Internet-based collaborative environment where

Land Grant University content providers exchange objective, research-based knowledge.

5 Adapted from Worksheet 1 – Monthly Spending Plan, available at www.extension.org/mediawiki/files/7/70/Worksheet_1_Monthly_Spending_Plan.pdf

6 Managing your stress through economic times. American Psychological Association. Nov. 2010. www.apa.org/helpcenter/economic-stress.aspx

7 Debt management in tough times. <http://www.extension.org/pages/15963/debt-management-in-tough-times>