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STRESSED OVER MONEY?

Coping with Financial Stress

Financial distress impacts various aspects of life. Studies show that worrying about money increases anxiety levels, depression and is even linked with physical ailments.

People experiencing persistent financial worries are more likely to report sleep problems, fatigue, headaches, and digestive issues. Those challenges make it harder to eat well, keep medical appointments, and prioritize physical fitness. Thus, creating a vicious cycle where stress harms health, and worsening health makes stress harder to manage.

Common Financial Triggers

Many of the financial stress triggers seem familiar:

- ▶ **Rising cost** of everyday living: rent, groceries, utilities, transportation
- ▶ **Unpredictable expenses** like car repairs, unplanned medical bills, and sudden household needs
- ▶ **Debt and loan payments** piling up, especially if income varies or unexpected financial hits occur
- ▶ **Living paycheck to paycheck** with little or no savings buffer
- ▶ **Unclear or constantly changing financial goals** and a lack of a budget or plan

These stressors weigh heavily, especially when combined with other life demands like family care, work, or health issues.

Habits that Reduce Financial Anxiety

You don't need to solve everything at once. The following tips will help reduce stress and build financial resilience over time:

- ▶ **Schedule regular "money check-ins"**
Develop a weekly or monthly system for reviewing income and expenses. Knowing what's coming helps turn uncertainty into calm and avoids being caught off guard.
- ▶ **Create a bare-bones budget**
If you missed last week's Wellness Wednesday, go back and take a look at some of the budgeting tips we suggested. Even a simple plan, "must-pay," "nice-to-pay," "save/pay down debt," can give you some much-needed structure. Having a safety net can reduce the mental burden of constant money-related decisions.

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► **Limit non-essential spending for a set time**

A short “spending freeze” for two or four weeks can help reset habits. Use your savings to build a small emergency fund, which can reduce anxiety about unexpected costs.

► **Be mindful with financial decisions**

Before making impulse purchases or even big expenses, pause and ask yourself, “Do I need this now?” or “Will this support my goals and health?” That pause eliminates the emotion from spending.

► **Incorporating Budgeting with Wellness**

Allocating even a small, fixed amount into a designated “Wellness Fund” is critically important. Use these funds to purchase nutrient dense grocery items, gym membership, and co-payments for medical appointments. Knowing this fund exists, will generate peace of mind and demonstrates your prioritization for health and overall wellness.

► **Relaxation and Techniques to Decompress**

Use stress-relief tools to help mitigate financial worries. Try incorporating deep breathing

techniques, speaking with a friend while walking or simply meditating and journaling. Lowering stress levels is crucial for reducing emotional and physical pain stemming from financial anxiety.

Tips for Developing Financial Stability

Intermittent saving offers temporary relief. However, consistency is key. Suggested strategies:

- **Create an automatic savings plan.** Allocating a small amount per paycheck will compound over time.
- **Establish an emergency fund** to cover up to six months of essential expenses. Doing so reduces worry if unexpected needs arise.
- **Look into financial-wellness support** through benefit programs, credit-counseling, or community resources.
- **Combine financial health with physical health goals.** Remember, prudent budgeting supports cultivating a healthy lifestyle.

Evidence shows that combining financial education and wellness leads to better health outcomes overall, like improved mood, reduced hospital visits, and increased wellness behaviors.

Where to Get Help

If money stress feels overwhelming, you don’t have to go through it alone. Resources available to you include:

Resources to Support Your Goals

- **ComPsych EAP**  offers confidential financial counseling, debt-management support, and stress-management resources.
- **BCBSIL**  includes access to wellness tools, health coaching, virtual visits, and

BONUS TIP: Make It a Wellness Plan, Not Just a Budget

Think of your financial plan as an integral component of your total wellness strategy. A healthy budget provides stability, making it easier to enhance your lifestyle with nutrition, exercise, mental health, or preventive care.

RECAP for Budgeting Holistically:

- **Build** a small “health fund” each month — for gym, healthy groceries, or preventive visits
- **Automate** savings transfers to coincide with payday so you’re less tempted to spend the “extra”
- **Use** budget visibility to cut unnecessary subscriptions or impulse spending and redirect those funds toward something meaningful, like a savings goal or family activity
- **Review** your finances quarterly and use a mental check-in just like you would monitor sleep or nutrition

programs that support both physical and financial wellness.

Check your employee portal or log-in page to explore support programs. Use these tools, take it one step at a time, and remember you’re investing in more than just a budget. You’re investing in yourself.

A screenshot of a 'Secure Member Log In' form. It has two input fields: 'Username' with a 'Forgot Username' link, and 'Password' with a 'Forgot Password' link and an eye icon for toggling visibility. Below the fields is a 'Log In' button. Underneath is a link for 'Don't have an account? Activate now to get the most of your policy.' followed by an 'Activate Your Account' button. At the bottom, a small text block says 'Have questions about signing up or logging in? Visit the Login Help U2 page in our Help Center.'

SOURCES: [Ryu and Fan](#), [BrightPlan](#), [Time](#), [Columbia University Irving Medical Center](#)