

FINANCIAL STRESS AND YOUR HEALTH

DECEMBER 2023



Feeling stressed about finances? Know that you are not alone. According to the American Psychological Association, 72% of adults report feeling stressed about money. Likewise, the Everyday Health: United States of Stress survey reports finances are a major source of stress, more often than politics, work, and family.

Understanding financial stress is important because it can cause both physical and emotional health issues. Financial stress commonly leads to anxiety (including panic attacks) and depression.


Some signs of mental effects:


Poor concentration


Feelings of hopelessness

Constant worry

Stress is not just “in your head”. It can have profound effects on the body as well. A few examples of health problems caused or worsened by stress:


 Heart disease and/or high blood pressure

 Stomach and intestinal problems


 Eating disorders and weight gain/lose


 Diabetes


 Insomnia


 Weakened immune system leaving us more susceptible to viral infections like colds/flu


Some financial coping techniques include:

 **Look at your finances** - Make a list of problem areas.

 **Track spending** - Include where discretionary money goes.

 **Write down your financial goals** - Take small steps to reach your overall goal. Example: If your goal is to pay off credit card debt - start by paying off your smallest balance. When that's paid off, take that payment & add it to your next smallest balance. Repeat until all cards are paid off.

 **Get support** - Whether this is financial planning support or an emotional support group, it's important to have someone to talk to.

 **Budget** - Leave room in your budget for taking care of your health including healthy food, treating your chronic health problems, and seeing your doctor when needed.

There are some general coping mechanisms that can be helpful. These include mindfulness techniques like meditation or yoga, eating healthy, getting some type of exercise or movement like walking, and getting enough sleep. If you are struggling with depression or anxiety, talk to your health provider.

Lastly, holiday spending can add to financial stress. Whether it's spending for gifts, big meals, or travel, be honest with yourself about how much money is available in your budget. Make a holiday budget and stick with it. Consider gifts that you can make or don't have to buy (like a task you can do for someone or doing an activity together). Avoid putting the holidays on a credit card. For next year, try starting a Christmas Club —put a little in it every payday. If possible, have it directly deposited from your paycheck. Example of how it works: \$10 per week over 52 weeks = \$520 for Christmas next year. You won't miss that little bit now, and you'll have cash for the holidays next year.

- SOURCES:**
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