

Ten Steps to Take During Times of Financial Crisis

Overview

Ten ways to ease your anxiety about your finances and the economy.

The current financial crisis has many people worried for themselves, their families, and about making ends meet. If you are worried about money, here are ten ways to ease your anxiety by focusing on the areas in your life over which you have control.

1. **Watch for and manage symptoms of stress.** A financial crisis can trigger stress in people of all ages. Watch for signs of stress in yourself and in the people you love. These may include changes in sleeping or eating patterns, headaches, irritability, anger, difficulty concentrating, and depression. If you're having difficulty managing stress, take care of yourself by eating right, getting enough sleep, setting aside regular time for activities you enjoy, and learning ways to relax. If you're unable to manage the stress on your own, seek help from a professional. Your health care provider can help. You can also contact the program that provided this publication for help in managing stress.
2. **Limit media exposure to financial news if it makes you anxious.** It's important to stay informed about the financial situation, but if the news is making you feel anxious, try to avoid it. Or, limit yourself to one or two trusted sources of news.
3. **Pull together with family and friends for emotional support and share ideas about ways to save money.** Help one another through these uncertain times, both by offering emotional support and by pooling your resources. You might share the cost of child care, for example, carpool together, shop at discount stores together to save money, or even share living expenses.
4. **Review your budget and cut unnecessary expenses.** Track your spending and trim the extras, such as takeout meals, cable television, or entertainment out. Save at the grocery store by using coupons and buying less expensive brands. If you have any money left over, use the savings to pay down debt and to build an emergency fund. Financial experts recommend setting aside enough money to cover three to six months' worth of daily living expenses. That may feel overwhelming to think about just now, but start with small amounts today and make it a longer term goal.
5. **Work with creditors if you are in debt.** Call each creditor and ask for smaller monthly payments or reduced interest rates and more time to pay off your debt. Most creditors will try to work with you if you explain your situation and demonstrate that you intend to meet your obligations by paying even a small amount each month.
6. **Review your retirement and savings plans with a professional.** Don't make short-term emotional decisions with long-term investment plans. Meet with a trusted

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financial adviser before making any decisions to sell assets or move money to different accounts. If you don't have a financial adviser or planner, make sure you choose one who is certified.

7. **Talk with your manager if the current financial crisis is affecting your work or productivity.** If you are working longer hours, are worried about job uncertainty, are experiencing feelings of stress or overload, or are dealing with other issues at work, talk with your manager about your concerns and about possible solutions. Also, focus at work on ways to reduce your stress. During your break, practice five minutes of deep breathing exercises, or get out of your workspace for a brief walk. Both are good ways to reduce stress.
8. **Try not to get caught up in rumours.** Change makes people uneasy. And when we don't have answers, we tend to fill in the gaps with rumours and stories. If you're facing change at work and you've heard rumours that worry you, ask your manager whether they're true. Your manager may not have answers or may be limited in what he or she can share with you or the team, but it's important to let your manager know that you're concerned.
9. **Remember how you've faced difficult challenges in the past.** What worked for you then? How can you use some of those strategies now? Simply reminding yourself of your capabilities can help you feel more in control of the current financial crisis.
10. **Don't be afraid to seek help.** The program that provided this publication provides help with a range of issues related to the current financial crisis. The program can walk you through what to do if you can't meet your credit card bills, are behind in your mortgage, or are worried about foreclosure. It can help you find fuel or utility assistance programs in your area if you are worried about home heating costs this winter. It can help you find assistance for every member of your family. Contact the program for information and resources.

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