

Everything in Moderation: The 2009 Money Diet

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When it comes to getting fit, money and food really aren't all that different. Both satisfy basic needs in our lives. Yet without boundaries, they can get us in a lot of trouble. Below are a few tips from diet experts that also apply when trying to deal with personal money matters. It's all about planning and moderation. Here are some ideas you might consider if you are implementing a *money diet* this year.

1. **Figure out where you are, where you need to be, and what are your long-term goals:** We've all seen those charts that tell us what we should weigh based on our height and age. If only money were that simple. That's why you should get some help if you've never tried to assess your money health before. A financial planning or consumer credit professional can ask the right questions and help you develop a customized plan. They can show you a good approach based on your age, your earning potential, and new habits you may need to consider developing. Put your long-term goals in writing. It gives them a formality and a starting point for the planning you must do.
2. **Track your spending...in detail:** Whether you do it with a pen and a notebook or a computer program, make a concerted effort to track your everyday spending. Physicians say overweight people should track every morsel of food they eat; with money, it's the same thing. Knowing where every dollar goes gives a quick picture where money can be saved or invested.
3. **Create a financial calendar:** Take a big 2009 desk calendar (or an electronic calendar that allows space for lots of notes to yourself) and in each day's square where you know you'll have to make a payment, write down the reason and the expected amount. (Hint: Write very small!) That way, you'll make sure you aren't tempted to overspend around those dates. What goes on your calendar? Here are a few examples.

Everything you have to pay on a regular basis and expenses you know are coming up. Monthly mortgage, auto or rent payments; student loans, monthly utilities, home, auto, life or disability insurance; retirement savings; property taxes; tuition bills; a new car payment; big home maintenance expenses; property taxes; credit card payments (with payment amounts that exceed the minimum) and, vacations are common examples. What will this crowded calendar tell you? That by attacking debt, making certain sacrifices and spending and saving smarter, you can eventually un-crowd that calendar and really take control of your financial life.

4. **Permanently change your spending habits:** People who have lost a significant amount of weight - and kept it off - usually report that they've made slight but permanent lifestyle changes to do so. Money success requires similar dedication. For example, people who have rewarded themselves with unrestricted spending sprees may want to consider developing alternate behaviors that bring them just as much satisfaction. It's all about finding out what you really value.
5. **Don't go it alone:** Leading weight-loss programs like Weight Watchers have had long-term success for two reasons: affordability and easy access to information and support. Working with a financial planning or consumer credit professional on an ongoing basis can help you develop the right plan and stick to it.

6. **Build disappointments and recovery into the plan:** The fact is, with food or money; many of us go off course at times. The important thing is to have a plan for corrective action if it happens or is about to happen. If you can minimize the damage and get back on course, your progress will continue.

7. **Remember the LIFELINE Program can be an excellent starting point:** Sometimes it's difficult to get started when making difficult life changes. The HealthQuest **LIFELINE** Program has helped hundreds of employees confidentially deal with personal money management concerns such as:
 - home budgeting
 - wise use of credit
 - debt consolidation
 - credit matters
 - tax issues and concerns
 - college funding
 - estate planning
 - investments
 - retirement planning

Call LIFELINE 24/7 at 1-800-284-7575. They are ready to help!

Summary of LIFELINE Employee Assistance Services

Call LIFELINE 1-800-284-7575 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for confidential help handling life's stresses. State of Kansas benefits eligible employees and their family members living in the same household can receive the following benefits at no cost:

Short-term counseling (1-4 face-to-face sessions per issue) with an EAP counselor for a wide variety of concerns. A few of the most common examples why employees use the LIFELINE program are:

- Day-to-day stresses
- Depression and anxiety
- Life transition concerns
- Problems with co-workers or supervisor
- Stress due to layoffs or furloughs
- Loss of a loved one
- Marital and Family issues
- Drug and Alcohol problems

The following services are also available:

- Elder care consultations with an elder care specialist
- Child care referrals from a child care specialist
- Legal consultation with an attorney
- Financial consultations with a professional
- Extended benefit for employees and immediate family members for 6 months after any layoff action
- Life Coaching Programs(employee only)**

****To sign up for life coaching or get more information, visit:**

<http://www.khpa.ks.gov/healthquest/lifeline.html>

Take advantage of this valuable employee benefit. For help with the day-to-day stressors of life, simply call **LIFELINE at 1-800-284-7575** any time, day or night, 7 days a week. That's all you need to do. Just pick up the phone. Your call will be completely confidential.