

https://www.unionleader.com/news/business/money_sense/money-ense-holidays-can-bring-financial-stress/article_472e0f88-c354-5835-81d2-fe425f7c2510.html

'Money \$ense': Holidays can bring financial stress

By Marc Hebert
Nov 20, 2021

With the holidays right around the corner, many start to experience the financial stress of everything that goes with it. There is food to buy, gifts to purchase, and all the little things that go into making the holidays, holidays. Often, this means added debt once the season is over.

If you fall into this category, don't feel alone. A report released by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2015 showed that 72% of adults feel stressed about money at least some of the time, and 22% said the amount of stress they experienced was extreme.

Stress can be a factor in personal health. It can lead to issues such as fatigue and, over time, more serious health problems. However, there are some things you can do to help reduce the stress in your life.

The first is to take a step back and review your situation carefully. This involves getting an accurate picture of your finances. What is actually causing you stress? Perhaps debt is the major area. List out who you owe, the interest rate, and the minimum payment. Your bank and credit card statements will help you determine where your money is being spent. Remember, this is a first step and you are doing it just to determine the scope of the problem.

If you are married, you are not in this alone. Your spouse can be an important ally and communication is vital. Actions to improve your finances are best done together. If this isn't the case, more financial stress might be in the cards. In addition, spouses can be a valuable source of emotional support at a time when you may need to make difficult decisions. Not married? Family and friends can be supportive as well.

Now that you have a picture of your finances, you can go back and take a look at how you are spending your money. Are there changes you could make to free up funds to use for other purposes? Do you have an emergency reserve or can you start building one? Do you have a budget? Can you sell some of your possessions to raise cash? Can you get a part-time job for more income? Are you spending money on areas you don't really need to? Can you spend less on things you actually need? Exerting control over your situation can help to ease your stress.

In addition to reviewing your current situation, you will want to look forward to the future. Think about your long-term financial goals. What are they? How much do you need to save in order to meet the goals? Can you develop a savings plan in order to do this? Develop a debt repayment plan, if needed. Putting pen to paper and writing down the ways you and your family can



manage your finances can reduce stress. This process can help bring all of your financial concerns to light. In the end, protect financially what really matters to you most.

If you just can't handle the stress, get some help. Consider talking to your doctor, a mental health professional or an employee assistance resource, for example. If debt is a problem, credit or debt counseling services are available to help. A financial professional can also be a valuable resource. Ask for support from people you trust.

Finally, find the positive in your life. What ways are you making progress toward your goals each and every day? Even the small steps matter. Finding the positive things happening in your life can go a long way toward reducing the stress you feel and make each day a bit brighter.

Marc A. Hebert, MS, CFP, is a senior member and president of the wealth management and financial planning firm The Harbor Group of Bedford. Email questions to Marc at mhebert@harborgroup.com. Your question and his response might appear in a future column.