Positive change

managing financial stress

Money matters are part of family life.

Every family has expenses. These may include:

- rent or mortgage
- bills
- groceries
- health care
- other needs, such as clothing, transportation and recreation.

Sometimes, finances are a source of stress for families.

Money matters can be stressful. If financial stress isn't managed well, it can lead to:

- anxiety or depression
- abuse of alcohol or other drugs
- physical health problems
- emotional or behavioral problems in children
- marital or family problems—even violence.

That's why it's important to take care of financial stress—before it takes a toll on your family.

What causes financial stress?

Certain situations can shake up finances.
A major change can lead to financial stress. For example, finances may be affected by:

- job loss or a bad business year
- separation, divorce or death of a family member
- a new baby.

But financial stress can affect a family at any time.
A family may find itself under financial stress for no one particular reason. It can also build up over time.

Learn to recognize financial stress.

Do you:

- often worry about—or argue over—money?
- seem to spend more than you make?
- have to use credit cards for everyday purchases?
- only make minimum monthly payments?
- tend to make payments late?
- feel overwhelmed by debt?
- have general symptoms of stress (such as anxiety, moodiness, or trouble eating or sleeping)?

Any "yes" answers could mean you are experiencing (or are at risk for) financial stress.

Put family first.
This is especially important during times of stress.

Explain the situation to children.
Tell them what's going on. In the case of job loss, for example, let children know how the change will affect the family.

Keep up routines.
It's important to try to keep life "normal." Make sure your family continues to:

- eat meals together
- respect rules at home and school
- do things together (when cost is not a factor).

Stay positive.

Your situation is temporary. You can take steps to make it better. Remember—children learn how to cope with stress by watching you.

Create a family budget.

This is the first step toward regaining control of your finances.

Figure out your total monthly income.

This includes:

- your take-home pay
- Social Security, unemployment and other benefits
- any other source of income, such as child support payments.

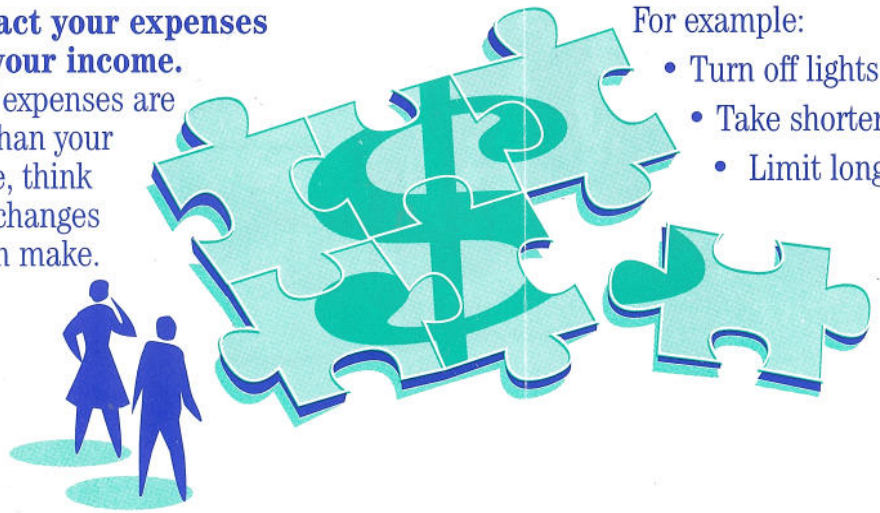
Add up your total monthly expenses.

Include your family's:

- immediate needs—rent or mortgage, food, heating, etc.
- other expenses—credit card or car payments, for example.
- occasional expenses—such as gifts and dining out.

Subtract your expenses from your income.

If your expenses are more than your income, think about changes you can make.



Find ways to reduce expenses.

Watch your spending.

For example:

- Avoid buying items you can do without right now.
- Save on groceries. Look for specials, use coupons and choose store brands when possible.
- Have low-cost fun—for example, go to the park instead of a movie.

Postpone major purchases (such as furniture or a car) until finances are under control.

Use credit wisely.

Do not charge what your budget can't cover. Try to pay off your bill each month. If you cannot make payments, contact your creditor immediately.

Save at home.

For example:

- Turn off lights when not in use.
- Take shorter showers.
- Limit long-distance calls.

Manage your stress.

A parent's stress can affect the whole family.

Simplify your life.

If you feel overwhelmed, try to cut back on your daily demands.

Learn ways to relax.

For example, try deep breathing or listening to soothing music.

Take care of yourself.

Stress can lead you to neglect your health and well-being. Be sure to:

- Eat healthy meals.
- Stay physically active. (Talk to your health-care provider before starting an exercise program.)
- Get enough rest.
- Do things you enjoy.

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Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
AR 600-85

Purpose:

The purpose of the Army Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a job-based program is to:

• To help employees in identifying and resolving problems that may affect their job performance and well-being.

• To assist management in addressing productivity issues.

• To promote installation work/life/wellness programs.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is the corner stone of an effective EAP. Employee confidence in the competence and trustworthiness of the EAP staff plays a key role in program success.

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