

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Tips For Financial Freedom In The New Year

(NAPS)—A new year can be a new opportunity to manage money more successfully.

Here are some tips on how to get out of debt, stay out of debt, and save some money from the experts at Novadebt, a non-profit consumer credit counseling agency.

1. Take a moment to reflect on last year—what worked, what didn't and what you can change for the future.

2. Set goals. Make sure they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

3. Open a savings account and commit to making a regular deposit into the account monthly.

4. Deal with debt. Increase the payment being made to creditors. Take a look at transferring balances on any credit cards to lower interest rate accounts. Speak with a credit counselor about how to best approach your individual financial situation.

Signs that you are developing a problem with debt include not knowing how much is owed on existing bills, paying late fees more than twice in a year, having difficulty making minimum payments on credit cards, withdrawing money from a retirement fund to pay current bills, spending more than you earn and "dipping" into savings to cover debt.

5. If you don't already have a budget, take the time to develop one that fits the needs of the household. If you already have a budget, take a look at it again and re-evaluate spending and income, carry a book or notepad with you for a month. Log every purchase



One sign that you may have a debt problem is "dipping" into savings to repay consumer debt.

to help focus your mind on budgeting and help you reduce the amount of unnecessary purchases you make.

6. Begin contributing to a 401(k) plan. If you already have one, consider increasing the contribution. A 401(k) is an excellent way to make sure some money is set aside for retirement.

7. Schedule meetings with your family to discuss finances. Set up goals and a plan that the family can work on together.

8. Save spare change. You might be surprised at how much spare change can add up to.

Novadebt is a non-profit social service agency that provides educational materials at no cost through brochures, articles, counseling, workshops and seminars. They conduct thousands of free budget counseling sessions and over 100 free financial workshops and seminars each year. For more information, or a free consultation with one of Novadebt's certified credit counselors, call 1-800-99-BILLS or visit www.novadebt.org.