

# The Road to Financial Freedom

## Financial Tips To Grow With



No matter what your age, a solid plan is important for your financial life to evolve and bloom. If you go about things the right way, good money habits will take root and you can reap the rewards!

### Children

Kids have a good chance of having a healthy financial future if they are taught the value of saving and spending wisely at a young age. Remember that children learn by example. Are you confident that your current financial habits will teach your children the right ideas about money?

Online tools and internet games such as Financial Soccer, Financial Football and Money Metropolis, as well as Peter Pig's Money Counter (PracticalMoneySkills.com/Games) might help younger children. Teens and college students can visit [Indebted.com](http://Indebted.com), a financial education site that offers budget calculators, quizzes and helpful financial information. One featured game, Debt Ski, shows young adults the importance of budgeting for necessities and extra items.



### Adults

At this stage in life you may become more concerned about paying off your debts.



While you complete your debt settlement program, you can begin thinking about savings for retirement and other personal goals. For a financial strength score visit [FinancialStrengthBuilder.com](http://FinancialStrengthBuilder.com). This site also features various educational and money-saving tools. You can also go to [TheBudgetQueen.com](http://TheBudgetQueen.com) for a variety of budgeting tools and free calculators. For retirement planning try [MassMutual.com/Calculators](http://MassMutual.com/Calculators).

### Golden Years

To help with prescription costs, find out if you qualify for Patient Assistance Programs (PAPs) which are offered by various pharmaceutical companies. Visit [PatientAssistance.com](http://PatientAssistance.com) for more information.

If you need help paying your monthly utility bills, contact your provider to see if there are any assistance programs available to you.

If you want to go back to work or delay retirement, you might want to visit websites such as [Seniors4Hire.org](http://Seniors4Hire.org), [Workforce50.com](http://Workforce50.com) and [RetirementJobs.com](http://RetirementJobs.com). You could also visit [AARP.org](http://AARP.org) for resources and information.



## Sowing The Seeds Of Financial Success

If you need to reevaluate your financial priorities, plant a seed and get ready to cultivate good habits for abundant financial rewards!

### Decide What You Want To Plant.

Take some time to think about how you want to go about your financial plan. Start small and work your way up. Remember that you want to avoid planting more than you can handle.

**Find A Suitable Container.** Dig deep to find a budget that helps you get on track. Consider what works best for you. You may need to readjust your wants and needs to stay grounded.

**Fill Your Pot.** Take advantage of educational materials offered by your debt settlement company. Soak up all the financial knowledge you can.

**Plant Your Crop.** Use your educational tools and what you have learned. Try looking at debt and unnecessary purchases as weeds that can ruin your hard work. If you make a mistake, get back up and keep going. Remember to treat yourself once in a while to a budget-friendly treat.

### Enjoy A Bountiful Harvest.

Keep reminding yourself that you are harvesting a financial crop that can enrich your life. Try different methods and experiment to see what form of budgeting fits your life the best.



## Creditor Intervention Program Overview

**T**he Creditor Intervention Program is designed to counteract various problems that can stem from collector harassment. You can contact us for assistance in dealing with collectors whose actions may not be in compliance with the requirements of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA). Keep in mind that the following steps are not always all inclusive and/or taken in the exact order shown below.

**1. Reducing Telephone Contact:** As an initial step in preventing collector harassment, we counsel clients on strategies and devices they can use to minimize the number of collector phone calls they receive.

**2. Creditor Call Logs:** Clients should submit detailed call logs for UCAN to review and document or record. Within 24 to 48 hours of receiving a new call log, UCAN will contact the client to gather any additional information and to discuss any further action that could be taken. The information provided by the client is added to the case file for possible further use by UCAN or by our successful attorney network.



**3. Contact with Collector:** In most cases, a UCAN Consumer Advocate will go to the source of the harassment by immediately contacting the collector in question. The written request faxed to the collector includes a Letter of Authorization and a letter introducing UCAN and explaining UCAN's involvement. A call may also be placed to the collector asking for any possible harassment to be stopped and the collection calls kept to

a minimum while the client is experiencing their financial hardship. If the harassment continues, further actions can be taken.

### 4. Client Cease Communication Letter:

A Cease & Desist letter is a written request from the client to the collector directing them to stop all telephone contact. After the client signs and returns this letter to UCAN, we will in certain instances send it to the collector if we believe it will successfully end the harassing phone calls. UCAN later contacts the client to ensure that the phone calls have stopped. If not, then further action could be taken.

**5. Attorney Network:** If it appears that a possible violation of the FDCPA has taken place, UCAN may refer the client to an attorney for a no-charge consultation. This consultation may then lead to representation for the case on a contingency basis. All evidence compiled by UCAN and the client would be forwarded to the attorney, who would determine the next course of action. This may result in the filing of a legal complaint with a demand for damages. (This service is currently available in certain states).

**6. UCAN Cease Communication Letter:** In certain instances, should the collector continue to call the client, a stronger Cease & Desist letter may be sent under UCAN signature. Copies may also be forwarded to the Federal Trade Commission, the state attorney general, and any other applicable regulatory bodies.

**7. Attorney General/ FTC Referral:** In the case of special violations or abusive collectors, a customized packet including all the information/evidence we have gathered can be sent to the Federal Trade Commission, the state attorney general, and any other applicable regulatory bodies.

UCAN's goal is dedicated to assisting their clients. Call us at 1-877-462-8226 or e-mail us at [info@ucan.net](mailto:info@ucan.net). Our FAX number is 1-877-895-7577. Normal business hours are Monday thru Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST and Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. We will be happy to answer your questions.

## Spare Change



### NCLC: Push To Save Paper May Hurt Some Consumers

**A**ccording to the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), the push by banks and credit unions to switch from paper statements to electronic alternatives may be causing undue difficulties for some individuals.

E-statements are being pushed by the banking industry in particular as a way to reduce the cost of maintaining check accounts. Some banks reportedly are even requiring customers to use e-statements in order to enjoy the benefits of free checking.

convenient way to use the internet.

Reports suggest that online access is less likely among individuals over age 65, consumers who do not have a high school education or households with incomes lower than \$20,000.

The NCLC argues that this segment of the population will be more apt to accrue late fees on credit and debit card accounts as well as overdue balances and other issues if they do not have the means to afford convenient internet access. The NCLC is calling on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to ensure paper statements remain an option for all consumers well into the future.

However, the NCLC reports that although e-statements may be more eco-friendly, they could cause more harm than good to those who do not have a

### Study: Americans Willing To Wait For Tax Refunds To Avoid Fraud

**O**ver 20 percent of tax filers who participated in a recent survey revealed that they would be willing to accept a delay in receiving their tax refund checks if it would help the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) combat tax-related identity theft.

According to the study results, which were reported by Bankrate.com, about one-third of those surveyed would be willing to wait at least two-months or more if they knew that the IRS' efforts were truly thwarting identity theft during tax season.

Approximately 10 percent of taxpayers revealed they would wait even longer than two months.





## Tips To Help You Survive A Financial Setback

It is normal for some people to have feelings of loss and doubt after a less-than-positive life experience. However, it is important to move ahead and find proactive ways to get back on your feet again.

Here are a few tips on how to stay proactive if life throws you a curve.



**Unemployment.** If this happens to you, you could begin to take action by visiting the Department of Labor at [DOL.gov](http://DOL.gov) (866-487-2365) to learn more about unemployment benefits and to search lists of unemployment offices according to state. Also, The Center For Debt Management suggests that you review your employer's severance benefits, including the temporary continuation of your health insurance.

**Medical Expenses.** Since mistakes can



happen, it might be wise to review all doctor and hospital bills and insurance claim

payments/denials. If you find a discrepancy on your bill and cannot resolve the dispute with a doctor, hospital or insurer, you might want to contact your state consumer protection office or insurance regulator for guidance.

If you incur medical or hospital charges that you cannot afford to pay for in full, The Center For Debt Management suggests calling the service provider's billing department to try to negotiate a reduced bill or a payment plan with monthly payments. You might also benefit from the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC). Go to [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) and do a key word search for HCTC to find more information and see if you are eligible. In addition, if your medical bills are high, you might qualify for a federal tax deduction. Try to keep all bills, cancelled checks or other receipts in one place so you know where they are for tax time for your tax preparer.



**Death In The Family.** Before you commit to any funeral costs, you should consult with other family members and a lawyer to find out if any prior instructions or arrangements were made. Also, try to locate important documents, such as insurance policies, as well as an original copy of the most recent will. It is a good idea to make multiple copies of the death certificate, which will be needed to apply for death benefits (such as through life insurance policies or Social Security) and to access bank and other accounts.

If the family's medical insurance is through the deceased person's employer, you might want to consider options for continuing coverage.

**Divorce.** Divorce can be a complicated process and the laws are different depending on the state in which you reside. You don't want to go into anything without knowing your rights, so it might be wise to consult a professional. However, The Center For Debt Management suggests that you could possibly reduce some legal fees by working with a mediator to resolve certain issues such as child custody.

Failing to downsize after divorce could lead to debt. You may have to consider making some important financial changes. When it comes to spending, recognize that living your old lifestyle may not be possible on one salary.



## Inspiring Thoughts

Laura Ingalls Wilder is known by many as the feisty character portrayed by Melissa Gilbert on the long running television series "Little House on the Prairie".

Throughout her career as an author, rural journalist and essayist, Wilder drew material from her simple,

**"It is the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all."**

**- Laura Ingalls Wilder**



happy pleasures growing up on the prairies of Kansas, Minnesota and Dakota Territory. Cooking,

cleaning, playing with her sisters, her first job as a teacher in a small, one-room schoolhouse and eventual marriage to Almanzo Wilder were just a few of her happiest memories. Despite adversities throughout her life, money could not buy the tremendous happiness and blessings those memories brought her.

Perhaps your spending habits have forced you to reconsider what is important to you. If you are in a debt settlement program, you have made the first step to learn better spending habits. Perhaps you've already realized that focusing primarily on money and 'things' can suck you into a spending spiral.

Think about something fun and interesting you've accomplished or been a part of. It could be as simple as laughing with a friend or enjoying the companionship of a pet.

Many times, if we evaluate what money really means, we find that true happiness comes from the memories we make for ourselves.

A wise spending choice may be made on something that enriches our lives and leaves us with a lasting, happy memory but may cost nothing.



**"I just want to say thank you all for all of your help. Everyone in your company is so helpful. I couldn't be happier with your service. I just want you all to know how great you guys are doing!" - C.L.**

# More Ways To Boost Your Reserve Account

**B**elow are some suggestions on how to build your reserve account. We realize that everyone has a different set of circumstances. However, it is important to add money to your reserve account whenever possible so that you can obtain financial freedom sooner!



**Cancel Memberships If You Do Not Use Them Frequently.** Staying healthy and active are major priorities. However, a gym or health club membership can become a pricey monthly expense if you find yourself not using the facilities that often.

Consider finding less expensive ways to exercise and stay in shape. For example, walk or jog in a local park with friends or family members or do floor exercises while playing your favorite music.

**Consider Purchases Carefully.** It can be very easy to overspend on things we don't need. Clever advertising can sometimes make us feel that we can't do without a particular item. Before you make any purchase, other than food, clothing or basic needs, it is a good idea to think carefully if that item is really necessary. If in doubt, take a while to consider a purchase before you actually buy it. After thinking about it for a while you may decide you don't need it that badly after all.

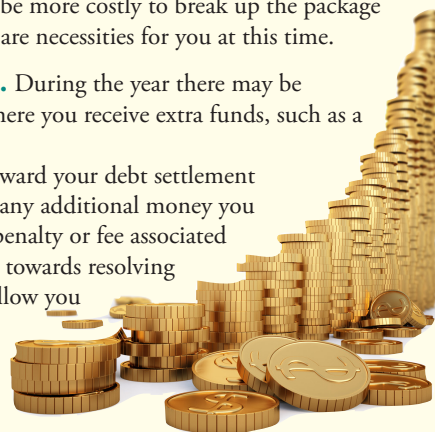
**Eliminate Extra Cell Phone Features.** It would be a good idea to reevaluate your cell phone bill if you haven't already done so. You could start by looking at your current phone bill to see exactly how you are using your phone. How many minutes do you really need each month? Do you text frequently? Or could you get away with using a smaller data plan until you pay off all of your debt? Call your cell phone provider and ask them how you could save. Several carriers offer phones without requiring customers to enter into a lengthy contract. This may be an option for you.

**Reevaluate Your Cable Needs.** Premium television services can be costly. Decide if all of those channels are absolutely necessary. Consider opting for basic cable services - or cut the cable cord completely. This may sound extreme, but it might offer you quite a bit of savings each month.

Before you make any decision, however, be sure to think about whether or not it would be a substantial savings in the long run. For example, if you currently receive cable, land-line telephone and internet services through one provider, it may be more costly to break up the package if your land line and internet are necessities for you at this time.

**Special Circumstances.** During the year there may be circumstances or occasions where you receive extra funds, such as a tax return or a work bonus.

Putting additional funds toward your debt settlement program is a great way to use any additional money you receive. Not only is there no penalty or fee associated with putting additional funds towards resolving your debts, doing so should allow you to resolve your debt more quickly than projected.



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## Company Announcements



**Online Settlement Offers:** Have you ever missed calls from us because you weren't home or couldn't get away from your desk? Have you ever lost an important e-mail from your settlement company?

You can now approve your settlements online! All you need to do is go to [www.CenturyNI.com](http://www.CenturyNI.com) and click 'Client Login' (or click 'First Time Users') to get your CNI ID and password.

If there is a settlement awaiting your approval you can review the details and approve it immediately! Your approvals are sent back 'real-time' to our representatives, so we can act on your behalf as soon as we hear from you.

If you've received a call, an e-mail or text message about your program but haven't had the time to get back to us, approving and managing your offers online is an easy way for you stay uninterrupted while we make your settlement program a success!



### Now Available: Live Chat!



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