

Resource Guide

Surviving Tough Economic Times

Employee Assistance Program 2009-2010

A MESSAGE FROM ROBERT FOLDESI

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

These are challenging times. Many of our family and friends here in California and across the globe are struggling with the financial and emotional aspects of a deep recession.

Although we are truly fortunate to be employed at a large, robust, well-run major university, I recognize that we and our family members are not immune to the stresses related to the national/international economic situation.

To provide information, resources and helpful hints, we have developed this resource guide. Please take a few minutes to review this material and return often with family or significant others to make use of the wisdom and guidance provided.

For more information on classes designed to help the CSUN community deal with this significant economic period, please refer to the HR home page, <http://www-admn.csun.edu/ohrs>.

Thank you,

Bob Foldesi

Associate Vice President for Human Resources

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MANAGING STRESS IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

As talk of falling housing prices, rising consumer debt and declining retail sales bring up worries about the Nation's economic health, Americans are feeling stress and anxiety about their financial future.

Money is often on the minds of most Americans. In fact, money is a top source of stress for eight out of ten Americans, according to the American Psychological Association's 2008 Stress in America survey. Add to the mix headlines declaring a looming economic recession, and many begin to fear how they can handle any further financial crunch.

But, like everyday stress, this extra tension can be managed. Psychologists first recommend taking pause and not panicking. While there are some unknown effects in every economic downturn, our Nation has experienced recessions before. There are also healthy strategies available for managing stress during tough economic times.

The American Psychological Association offers these tips to help with stress about money and the economy:



PAUSE, BUT DON'T PANIC

There are many negative stories in newspapers and on television about the state of the economy. Pay attention to what's happening around you, but refrain from getting caught up in doom-and-gloom hype, which can lead to high levels of anxiety and bad decision making. Avoid the tendency to overreact or to become passive. Remain calm and stay focused.



IDENTIFY YOUR FINANCIAL STRESSORS AND MAKE A PLAN

Take stock of your particular financial situation and what causes you stress. Write down specific ways you and your family can reduce expenses or manage your finances more efficiently. Then commit to a specific plan and review it regularly. Although this can be anxiety-provoking in the short term, putting things down on paper and committing to a plan can reduce stress. If you are having trouble paying bills or staying on top of debt, reach out to your bank, utilities or credit card company for help.



RECOGNIZE HOW YOU DEAL WITH STRESS WHEN IT COMES TO MONEY

In tough economic times, some people are more likely to relieve stress by turning to unhealthy activities like smoking, drinking, gambling or emotional eating. The strain can also lead to more conflict and arguments between partners. Be alert to these behaviors — if they are causing you trouble, consider seeking help from a psychologist or community mental health clinic before the problem gets worse.



TURN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

Times like these, while difficult, can offer opportunities to take stock of your current situation and make needed changes. Consider alternative, healthier ways to manage your stress. Try taking a walk — it's an inexpensive way to get good exercise. Having dinner at home with your family may not only save you money, but help bring you closer together. Consider learning a new skill. Take a course through the university. The key is to use this time to think outside the box and try new ways of managing your life.



ASK FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Credit counseling services and financial planners are available to help you take control over your money situation. If you continue to be overwhelmed by the stress, you may want to talk with a psychologist who can help you address the emotions behind your financial worries, manage stress and change unhealthy behaviors.

This tip sheet adapted from information from APA member Nancy Molitor, PhD./Copyright © 2008 American Psychological Association

IS WORRYING ABOUT MONEY CONTROLLING YOUR LIFE?

Stress and worry can take their toll on a life in many ways. How is it affecting you and your family?



PHYSICAL EFFECTS

- Restlessness/feeling keyed up
- Feeling cold/clammy
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shaking/tremors
- Nausea/stomach problems
- Lowered immunity/getting sick more often
- Dizziness/feeling unsteady
- Tight/tense muscles
- Increased frequency of headaches
- Increased intensity of headaches
- Lack of energy
- Difficulty sleeping



MENTAL & EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

- Difficulty focusing
- Feeling out of control
- Feeling incompetent
- Increased irritability/short tempered
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Apprehension
- Lack of motivation/apathy
- Blocking others out/not wanting to be close



HOW ABOUT YOUR KIDS?

- Increased sadness
- Increased feelings they are bad
- Drop in school grades
- Lack of interest in things they used to enjoy
- Increased activity level; acting silly or giddy
- Increased angry outbursts
- Increased fears about unrelated things (i.e.: separation issues, fear of the dark, etc.)
- Clingy behavior
- Nightmares/difficulty falling or staying asleep



TRY COUNTERACTING YOUR STRESS BY DOING SOMETHING YOU ENJOY, FOR FREE!

- Exercise
- Do yoga
- Watch an enjoyable movie
- Do a crossword or Sudoku puzzle
- Take a walk/hike/ride your bike
- Meditate
- Draw/paint/do something creative
- Work in the garden
- Play a game with your kids
- Read

IDENTIFYING PRODUCTIVE VS. UNPRODUCTIVE WORRY

PRODUCTIVE WORRY

This is the type of worry that motivates you to take steps to remedy the situation. Even the smallest step can allow you to move from worrying about the problem to fixing it.

UN-PRODUCTIVE WORRY

This is the kind of worry for which there is no answer. Unproductive worry leaves you feeling helpless because there is no active attempt to problem-solve and there is no one who can alleviate your concerns. Examples of unproductive worry: How long will this financial crisis last? Will I be able to take care of myself financially when I am old? What will happen to my family?

TASKS FOR UN-PRODUCTIVE WORRY

1. *Define the problem causing the worry.*
Example: I'm spending more money than I make.
 - Get as much information as possible about your spending patterns.
 - Review your records, or begin keeping them.
How much is coming in? How much is going out?
2. *Develop a budget.*
 - If you don't know where to start, you can find a basic format here:
<http://financialplan.about.com/cs/budgeting/l/blbudget.htm>
 - Identify essential expenses.
 - Figure out where you can cut back.
 - Look at ways you can supplement your income.
 - Keep lines of communication open with your family; don't make decisions in a vacuum.

TASKS FOR PRODUCTIVE WORRY

1. *Learn to accept uncertainty.*
 - Become familiar with those things in life you cannot control or be certain of.
2. *Change your perception of the unknown.*
 - Rather than equating the unknown with danger, think of it as neutral; you cannot be certain of its value until it becomes known.
 - Worrying about the unknown won't affect the outcome. It's more productive to worry about things you can do something about.
3. *Make room for "worry time."*
 - Set aside a specific place and time to do your worrying.
4. *Seek sage advice.*
 - Avoid rumors and do a "reality check." You would seek advice from a doctor if you were ill; talk to a financial advisor about money issues.

IF YOUR WORST FEARS ACTUALLY COME TRUE, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU WILL COPE?

People often underestimate their personal coping skills. We never know how we will respond to a crisis.





DON'T FORGET TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION

Children, no matter what their age, need to know that they are not being punished when you tell them you can't buy that certain something they simply *must* have.

Age-appropriate explanations that help them understand how the current economic downturn has affected you are important for many reasons. These explanations can teach children about the relationship between income and household expenses, which also helps them understand how your money is allocated the way it is. Explain to them that all of you will have to make sacrifices until the situation improves. Emphasize that it *will* improve; things will not be this way forever.

CHALLENGING UNPRODUCTIVE WORRIES ABOUT MONEY

Don't let your stress get the better of you. Most of your worries are unfounded, and those that have an element of truth can be talked down to a more manageable level. Here's how:

EXAMPLES OF UNPRODUCTIVE WORRY	CHALLENGE THE UNPRODUCTIVE WORRY	TAKE POSITIVE, PRODUCTIVE ACTION
<p>1. I'm concerned about the impact of furloughs on my financial situation.</p>	 <p>There's no way I can know what the future will actually be, but I can begin preparing for what may come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review your budget - plan now. ✓ Take a look at needs vs. wants. ✓ Talk to your family about how changes in your financial circumstance might affect everyone. ✓ Start cutting expenses.
<p>2. What if I can't pay my bills?</p>	 <p>I don't have any idea what the future holds for me, but there are things I can do to maintain my good credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Talk to creditors to see if you can negotiate reduced payments and/or lower interest rates. ✓ Contact a certified credit counselor to explore all financial options. ✓ Establish a realistic budget based on actual income. ✓ Limit your expenses to vital necessities only.
<p>3. Identify some of your own unproductive worries:</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p> <p>d. _____</p>	 <p>Challenge each worry:</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p> <p>d. _____</p>	 <p>Identify productive actions you can take to ease your worries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ _____ ✓ _____ ✓ _____ ✓ _____

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE THINGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT ARE TRULY IMPORTANT!

HANG ON! IT'S GOING TO BE A BUMPY RIDE!

42 MONEY-SAVING TIPS FOR SURVIVING A RECESSION

Regardless of how economists refer to this economy, recession or no recession, people are hurting. When you combine the rising costs of gas and food, declining home values and a deflating dollar, we need to be more creative in our efforts to make ends meet. Here are some ideas for spending less:

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

1. Examine your spending habits and create a budget (see <http://financialplan.about.com/cs/budgeting//blbudget.htm>).

Knowing where you *spend* money is the first step in knowing where you can *save* money.

CUT YOUR EXPENSES AT HOME

2. Scale back the cable TV.

Switch to basic cable and you'll be amazed at how much money this will save.

3. Hang up the land line telephone.

If most of your calls are to other cell users in the same network, consider canceling the land line and using your cell phone exclusively.

4. Look into combined service packages.

If you need a land line telephone, many companies offer combined telephone/cable TV/Internet access.

5. Every now and then, designate a no-spend weekend.

Try to go an entire weekend without eating out, shopping, or ordering anything on-line.

6. Do it yourself.

What can you do yourself instead of paying someone else? Consider mowing the lawn, washing the dog, doing your own manicures/pedicures — even changing your car's oil.

CUT YOUR TRANSPORTATION COSTS

7. Check your vehicle's tire pressure each time you fill up with gas.

Under-inflated tires and dirty air filters can reduce your gas mileage.

8. Change your driving habits to save on gas.

Stop "flooring it" when you set out after a stop and lower your freeway speed. Both will save gas consumption.

9. Carpool a couple of times a week.

Take turns driving to the office with a co-worker, especially if they live reasonably close to you. This will lower your gas costs and reduce the wear and tear on your car.

10. Buy a used car.

You can save thousands of dollars by purchasing a used car. Make sure to have an independent mechanic check it out before you pay.

11. Wash your own car.	A wash-it-yourself service costs about half the amount of a professional car wash. But remember—there is currently a ban in the City of Los Angeles on washing your car in your driveway, unless your hose has a shut-off device. You may be cited for excess water run-off.
12. Consolidate errands to one trip.	Plan your route, too, to avoid driving in circles.
13. Unload your car trunk.	Extra weight in your trunk cuts down on gas mileage and increases wear on your tires.
14. Perform routine maintenance to extend the life of your car.	Change your oil every 5,000 miles. Look for specials on oil changes. An independent mechanic can save you money, especially on major repairs. Get a recommendation from a friend or co-worker.

CUT YOUR ENTERTAINMENT BUDGET

15. Skip the movie theater — rent instead.	Consider signing up for an on-line DVD rental service. No late fees and no gas wasted traveling back and forth to the rental store.
16. Say no to meeting with friends for dinner at a restaurant or agree to meet after dinner.	It's not fun to turn down a chance to go out with friends, but there are ways to say yes without spending a fortune.
17. Host a simple pot-luck dinner at your house.	Make sure everyone brings something, so that your budget doesn't go out the window.

MONEY AND INVESTMENTS

18. Get accurate information about the current budget situation at CSUN.	Follow the Campus Budget Updated FAQs online: http://www.csun.edu/presofc/campusbudgetnews-FAQs.html .
19. Diversify your income.	Look for ways to increase your income outside of your full time job. Do you have a hobby that you could turn into a small business?
20. Don't pay anything for banking privileges.	There are many free checking options out there that include no-fee basic services such as check writing, use of a debit card and ATM.
21. Save money on your insurance.	Assuming you have an adequate emergency fund in place, consider raising the deductible on your auto and/or home insurance; this will lower your premiums. If you participate in a health plan with premium deductions, you may want to consider moving to a \$0 cost medical plan during Open Enrollment. See http://www.csun.edu/ohrs/benefits .

22. Look into the CSU Health Care Reimbursement Account (HCRA) and Dependent Care Reimbursement Account.	If you have out-of-pocket medical expenses or pay for child care, set aside pre-tax money and file for reimbursement. Judge carefully; unused funds are not refunded. Sign-up is available during the fall Open Enrollment Period. See http://www-admn.csun.edu/ohrs/benefits .
23. Adjust your W-4.	If you received a huge refund this year, increase the numbers of exemptions and increase your take-home pay. Check out http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96196,00.html to help calculate the right number of deductions for you to break even.
24. Put away the credit cards.	Establish a pay-as-you-go attitude. Use credit cards as an absolute emergency (not a trip to Hawaii). Put money aside in a separate account for large-ticket items.
25. Stay away from the stores.	Stay out of the malls, especially, unless you know what you're shopping for and what your budget is. "Recreational" shopping leads to impulse buying.

CUT DOWN ON YOUR FOOD BILL

26. Pack your lunch.	It could be a sandwich, fruit and a bag of chips...or how about terrific leftovers, creative salads, or veggies and dip? In a pinch, a premade salad from the grocery store is less expensive than ordering salad in a sit-down restaurant.
27. Drink tap water.	Remember when nobody bought bottled water? If you have sensitivity to tap water chemicals, consider buying a water filter for your kitchen faucet.
28. Bring your own mug of coffee.	Coffee drinks cost between \$.99 and \$5.00. Expand that out a year, and you're saving real money (and the earth)!
29. Eat less meat.	Try a meatless dinner once a week. Beans and soy products such as tofu provide plenty of protein and cost less than meat.
30. Look for specials.	Start reading the food ads in Thursdays' newspapers. Buy items on special and on the "reduced to sell" rack.
31. Shop at farmers' markets for fresh and affordable produce.	Local farmers sell only what's in season, and often cheaper than in the supermarkets. This also reduces your "carbon footprint."
32. Use coupons wisely.	Cut coupons for only the things you normally buy. Try to use the coupons the same week they come out — stores often have the coupon items on sale.

33. Buy generic.	There is sometimes no difference between a brand name and a "plain label" product. Read the list of ingredients. This also goes for cleaning products and over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin.
34. Look at the unit price.	Packaging costs money! Buy more if you'll use it before it spoils. And repackage food yourself — the convenience of single servings is costly and creates more waste.
35. Switch to cloth napkins.	Cloth napkins are a great alternative to paper ones, which increase waste and add to your non-food budget.
36. Buy the right amount.	If you have room to store 18 rolls of paper towels, it makes sense to buy them in bulk and on sale. Buying 3 pounds of ground beef on sale only makes sense if you are able to use some and freeze some.
37. Make it yourself.	It's never too late to learn the basics of cooking. You'll not only save money, you'll also cut down on unintended salt and chemicals from packaged foods.
38. Take it with you.	Whether it's a picnic at the beach, a soccer game, or the Hollywood Bowl, pack that cooler and save money.
39. Reinvent the leftover.	For example, buy a whole chicken and roast it. Leftovers can then be put in sandwiches, soup, salads or casseroles.
40. Eat breakfast.	Breakfast staples, especially cereal, can be healthy and cost-effective. Add milk and a glass of juice, and you're set for the morning.
41. Serve on smaller plates.	You can put enough dinner on a 7-inch plate to fill most appetites, and it won't look like you're skimping. The remaining food can make a good lunch for the next day.
42. Avoid convenience stores.	"Convenience" here means prepared foods, lots of packaging and more costly than the same item purchased at a supermarket.

There is nothing with which every man is so afraid as getting to know how enormously much he is capable of doing and becoming.

Soren Kierkegaard

WEB AND COMMUNITY FINANCIAL RESOURCES

GETTING OUT OF DEBT	Consumer Credit Counseling Services: By Design Financial Solutions HUD-Approved Certified Credit Counselors	Phone: 800-750-2227 Fax: 323-890-9590 http://www.bydesignsolutions.org
	Debt Consolidation Guides (On-Line)	http://www.debtguides.org/
	Free Annual Credit Report	Phone: 877-322-8228 PO Box 10528, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281 https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp
	National Foundation for Credit Counseling	Phone: 800-388-2227 http://www.nfcc.org/
MORTGAGE, FORECLOSURE AND EVICTION ASSISTANCE	Guide for Avoiding Foreclosure (US Department of Housing and Urban Development – HUD)	http://www.hud.gov/foreclosure/
	Hope for Homeowners Program (HUD and FHA Services)	Phone: 213-894-8000 http://www.hud.gov/consumer/index.cfm
	Federal Housing Administration (Government-sponsored loans)	Phone: 800-CALL-FHA or 800-225-5342 http://www.fha.gov
	NACA (Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America)	Phone: 310-412-2600 Toll-Free: 888-297-5568 www.naca.com
	L.A. Housing Department Renter’s Hotline (Unfair Evictions for Renters)	Phone: 866-557-RENT
BUDGET MANAGEMENT	Clear Checkbook	https://www.clearcheckbook.com/
	Mint	http://www.mint.com/
	BudgetEdge	http://www.budgetedge.com/
	ExpenseView	http://www.expenseview.com/userLogin.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdefault.aspx
	Clear Checkbook	https://www.clearcheckbook.com/

Resources, continued.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE	Self-Help Legal Access Center (SHLAC) (Van Nuys Self-Help Center)	Phone: 818-374-7106 http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/lowcost/flfcountylosangeles.htm
	Free Legal Aid (California)	http://www.usattorneylegalservices.com/free-legal-aid-california.html
	Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles	Phone: 800-399-4529 http://www.lafla.org/service.php
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	Jobs@CSUN	http://www-admn.csun.edu/ohrs/employment/ Internal candidates, access jobs through the CSUN portal.
	Jobs at all CSU campuses	http://csucareers.calstate.edu/
HELP WITH RESUME WRITING	Susan Ireland Resumes	http://www.susanireland.com/
	Resume Resource	http://www.resume-resource.com/
	Career Zone Resumes	http://www.nycareerzone.org/cz/resources/jobseeker/resume.jsp
HELP WITH JOB INTERVIEWS	Ace the Interview	http://www.acetheinterview.com/interview/
	Career Lab	http://www.careerlab.com/art_closing.htm
	About.Com: Interviews	http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/u/jobinterviews.htm
	Quint Careers	http://www.quintcareers.com/career_doctor_cures/interview_preparation.html
HELP WITH MEDICAL COSTS	Cancer Care	800-813-4673 http://www.cancercare.org
	Free Medicine Program	http://www.freemedicineprogram.org/
	HealthWell Foundation	http://www.healthwellfoundation.com/index.aspx

Resources, continued.

MONEY SAVERS	Coupons	http://www.coupons.com
	Energy Efficiency/Energy Savers	http://www.energysavers.gov/
	Google's Tip Jar	http://moderator.appspot.com/#16/e=3cfc
	ValPak Coupons	http://www.valpak.com/coupons/home
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	L.A. County Department of Social Services (West Valley District): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cal-Works / Cash Aid• Food Stamps• Medi-Cal	(818) 718-5000 http://dpss.lacounty.gov/dpss/offices/82-westvalley.cfm

NOTES

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