

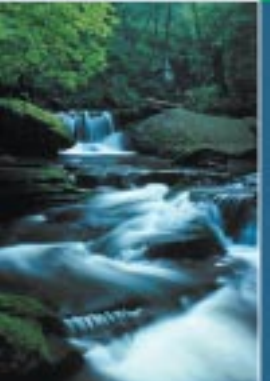
Money and Stress:

How to keep your money worries from killing you



A recent study at Ohio State University found that people with financial problems, in particular credit card debt, suffered from more emotional problems than those who didn't have money-related stress.

When you stop and think about it, it really is not surprising that cash, or the lack of it, so greatly affects our emotions. Money problems are not simply a shortage of small pieces of green paper, they are shortages of the niceties in life we have come to expect.



► Myvesta is a nonprofit consumer education organization. We provide a wide range of educational materials to assist those in financial need. Visit us on the Web at Myvesta.org.

Money problems mean not fulfilling dreams of giving our children the best education possible.

They mean dreading answering the phone for fear that it will be a bill collector calling.

In our worst fears, financial problems threaten the roof over our heads and the food on our tables.

Some of the most common types of emotional distresses people with money problems experience can be classified as either depressive disorders or anxiety disorders.

Bob's Story

Bob took pride in his ability to provide for his family. He wanted to make sure that they always had the best and that his three children had a bright future.

This usually meant living to the very limit of their budget. But there was always overtime available to help catch up when things got out of control.

Then Bob's company instigated cutbacks and no overtime was available. As demand for his employer's products diminished further, things got even worse and he actually got a pay cut.

Suddenly Bob could no longer "catch up" with his overspending and he found himself falling further behind each month.

Bob started feeling very bad about himself. He lost his appetite and nothing seemed fun anymore. The constant worrying would often wake him up in the middle of the night and prevent him going back to sleep. To Bob, life no longer seemed worth living.

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Depression can sometimes be treated through lifestyle changes with the help of a qualified counselor.

Like many people, Bob was suffering from depression as a result of his financial problems.

Psychological research has shown that when people feel powerless to change an unpleasant situation, such as money problems, a natural

response is to become depressed.

The depression and feelings of powerlessness often become intertwined and can send people into a downward spiral — you become depressed because you feel you can't change your situation and then the depression makes you feel even more powerless which, in turn, leads you to feel even more depressed.

Some think that depression is merely a state of mind that people can snap out of if they are willing. This is not true. Depression is an illness, just like heart disease or diabetes.

Like these illnesses, depression can sometimes be treated through lifestyle changes with the help of a qualified counselor. Sometimes treatment may involve use of medication in conjunction with talking therapy. The good news is that effective therapy can often bring depression under control within a period of six weeks to six months.

Signs of depression include:

- ▶ Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- ▶ Lack of pleasure in activities you normally enjoy
- ▶ Lack of motivation
- ▶ Change in appetite
- ▶ Sleep problems
- ▶ Anxiety or restlessness
- ▶ Feelings of guilt and/or worthlessness

- ▶ Problems with concentration
- ▶ Lack of energy
- ▶ Thoughts of suicide

If you or a loved one has experienced five or more of these symptoms for a period longer than two weeks, or if your symptoms interfere with your daily activities, consider contacting a licensed therapist, psychiatrist or your physician for an evaluation. Lower cost alternatives may include clinics at your local university.

A word about suicide ...

Some estimates indicate that as many as 15 percent of people with untreated depression may attempt suicide. People may feel that suicide is the only way out of their problems or see it as just punishment for their predicament.

It is very important to seek help immediately if you find yourself considering suicide. Talking to someone may not provide an immediate solution, but it will help you feel less hopeless. Call 1-800-SUICIDE for help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Sara's Story

Sara also had been struggling with bills for several months.

A few months back she began to delay opening some of them until the very last minute, because she knew that she didn't have the money to pay them all and it was very upsetting for her to try and deal with the situation.

Over time, she became more and more anxious about opening bills and began to put them off for longer and longer periods.

Even though she was trying to minimize the amount of time she spent working on her bills, the amount of time Sara spent thinking about them was increasing. In fact, she found herself

having a hard time concentrating on anything else.

She became terrified of answering the phone for fear that a bill collector would be on the other end.

Sara became very fidgety and tense and just could not seem to relax.

It's normal to feel a bit anxious about important events or issues in our lives. Being unable to control or turn off the feelings may be a sign that the anxiety you are feeling is more than plain, old-fashioned nervousness.

As with a depressive disorder, an anxiety disorder is a real illness that often requires the attention of a qualified professional to deal with.

Also, as with depression, most types of anxiety disorders can be treated by working with a counselor and sometimes require medication.

Anxiety disorders sometimes occur with depression.

Signs of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- ▶ Excessive anxiety and worry that is difficult to control
- ▶ The presence of at least 3 of the following:
 - Restlessness
 - Being easily fatigued
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Irritability
 - Muscle tension
 - Sleep disturbances

Anxiety disorders can take many different shapes in addition to those described above.

Sometimes a person will have intrusive thoughts over and over again.

Other people find themselves repeating tasks, such as hand washing or reviewing bank statements, compulsively.

In yet another type a person may have panic attacks or feel overly anxious about leaving the house.

If you think you may suffer from an anxiety disorder, there is help readily available. Consider contacting a licensed therapist, psychiatrist or your physician for an evaluation. For more information, contact the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, 6000 Executive Boulevard, Department A, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Their telephone number is (301) 231-9350.

Don't be afraid to seek help

It is ironic that two of the most prevalent problems in our society, financial and emotional distress, are among the most stigmatized problems. Because of this, people are often embarrassed to seek the help they need.

You are most certainly not alone. It is estimated that as many as 5 to 12 percent of men and 10 to 20 percent of women may suffer with depression at some point in their lives.

With bankruptcy rates at an all-time high, more and more people are feeling the pressures of stress related to their finances.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO SEEK HELP!

We, at Myvesta, firmly believe that there are answers to almost any financial problem. And there are very effective treatments for the emotional distress associated with financial problems.

If you, or someone you love, is experiencing emotional distress, we strongly urge you to use some of the excellent resources available.

Help yourself feel better and get back on the road to financial freedom and emotional well-being.

You deserve it!

About Myvesta...

Myvestasm is dedicated to helping people create healthy financial lives. The organization provides a wide range of materials to inspire and inform people so they can break down their barriers to financial and personal success. For more information visit Myvesta.org online.

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