



Wealth Matters Newsletter

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Stressed Out?

Money is the number one stressor in Americans' lives.

There's no doubt Americans are living in a supercharged, super stressful world right now. Even if the stresses of the world are not necessarily weighing you down, you might have a friend or loved one who is struggling. This information and these tips for coping might benefit them.

A survey by the American Psychological Association conducted between August 2016 and January 2017 shows that, for the first time in 10 years, Americans' overall stress levels have increased. The "Stress in America" survey typically finds that stress is caused by three main factors—money, work, and the economy. Today, younger Americans are worried about college debt, and older Americans are concerned about retirement. It appears everyone is anxious about the economic prospects of the next generation.

In a recent Gallup poll, it was apparent that, despite some signs of gains in the economy, average Americans aren't feeling them. It showed that Americans continue to be most worried about having enough money to retire; 64% were moderately to very worried about this. Not far behind that, Americans were also concerned about their ability to pay for the following:

- Medical costs of a serious illness or accident
- The standard of living they enjoy
- Normal monthly bills
- Medical costs for typical health care
- Rent, mortgage, or other housing costs
- Minimum payments on their credit cards
- College tuition for their children

Yet another poll—this one by GoBankingRates— showed that Americans are very worried about their ability to pay off debt, including credit cards. The second-most-common response was not having enough money for an

emergency. When you consider that Americans have a collective credit card balance of \$729 billion, it is little wonder they are concerned about getting out of debt.

Financial professionals typically recommend having three to six months' worth of expenses saved for emergencies, such as losing a job or paying a medical bill. However, about half of US adults don't even have \$400 saved that they could use for an unexpected expense, according to the Federal Reserve. Although experts suggest paying down high-interest debt as a priority, consumers must balance paying off their debts with accumulating their emergency funds.

This kind of stress can lead to serious problems with physical and mental health. In a new study by Payoff, researchers discovered that 23% of respondents were experiencing symptoms often associated with posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, related to their financial situations. For millennials, it was 36%. Symptoms of PTSD include reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, feeling bad about yourself or others, and feeling keyed up. Other symptoms can include the inability to control emotions or impulsive behavior.

Among other stressors, survey respondents worried about becoming homeless or being frequently late paying bills. Some denied the severity of their debt or the reality of paying it off. The study also showed that people's behaviors were irrational and motivated by denial and avoidance, which left them even less able to plan or manage their finances. Payoff researchers attribute some of the respondents' troubles to stagnant incomes, no savings, high levels of debt, and financial ordeals, such as foreclosures, catastrophic illnesses, and high medical debt.

While some stress can be good for us and motivate us, prolonged stress can affect us physically, and it can even lead to depression, anxiety, obesity, and heart conditions. To better manage your stress, learn and practice some of the following skills:

Stress Inoculation

This involves educating yourself about stress by talking with people who have been through it and rehearsing or preparing yourself for stress by pushing yourself to your limits. For example, run a challenging race and then implement what you learned from dealing with that when a stressful event hits you.

Build Resilience

Find social support, find a role model, face your fears, adopt a positive attitude, find meaning and purpose, and reframe the situation.

Exercise

It will not eliminate your stress, but it gives your body the physical conditioning it needs to recover from stress.

Rest Your Mind

Give your brain a chance to meditate, to shut down, and to stop thinking about the stresses in your life.

Control Your Breathing

Learning to control your breathing has been shown to reduce stress, increase alertness, and boost your immune system.

Write In A Journal

Writing down your thoughts, perspectives, feelings, and experiences can help you process the things you are thinking about or stressing over.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America recommends learning what your stress triggers are. Are they work, finances, family, school, or relationships? The organization also suggests limiting alcohol and caffeine, both of which can trigger anxiety and panic attacks; eating well-balanced meals and energy-boosting snacks; getting a full eight hours of sleep; and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.

Although the world will continue to move fast and bring a variety of pressures and worries, we can learn ways to react differently in order to keep our bodies and minds balanced and healthy. We would be happy to discuss financial stressors you may be encountering so please contact us any time.

Sources Available Upon Request

Building an Intentional Legacy

Many people would like to leave a mark on the world, whether large or small, in the form of their legacy. Whatever your passions in life—from philanthropy to family—your legacy should reflect these passions. At its core, a legacy is built on your personal values and how you choose to share those values to make an impact on the world. Your legacy also comprises your experiences as a person. Sharing your memories, stories, and perspectives with family members can connect them to your values and familial history.

Furthermore, a legacy isn't just what's left behind when you're gone; it can be a part of creating a purposeful and satisfying life for yourself, and your family, in the present. Comprehensive legacy planning allows you to not only transfer wealth but to intentionally pass down values, memories, and traditions. In this piece, we discuss the importance of consciously creating a legacy based on your values and show you some steps to help you get started.

Create a Legacy as an Act of Love and Generosity

Each of us will leave a legacy, whether we plan for it or not. Creating an intentional legacy is part of living a deliberate, purposeful life and having a clear vision for the future that will effect change and inspire our families. "To create a legacy is to think beyond yourself and to think about the people you love. It's intentional encouragement to the next generation to live a generous, purposeful life," says Tracy Gary, philanthropist and author of *Inspired Philanthropy: Your Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Giving Plan and Leaving a Legacy*.

If philanthropy is important to you, creating a strategic giving plan can help you align your gifts with your vision and values as well as increase the effectiveness of your gifts. In order to become a more engaged donor, Gary advocates moving away from "obligatory giving" to "transformative giving." She defines obligatory giving as reactive giving in response to appeals, pledges, and social commitments. In contrast, transformative giving emphasizes philanthropy that supports your values and seeks to make the greatest change in the causes you care about.

Though some may think of inspired giving as beyond their reach, Gary counters that "[it] isn't about how much money you have to give. It's about being intentional and aligning it with your values and what the community needs." By using your values to guide your philanthropy, you can be more strategic about what results you would like to see in your community and work toward that change.

Identify Your Values and Explore Meaningful Priorities

Just as creating a financial road map begins with discovering and prioritizing financial goals, an intentional legacy requires you to explore your core values and passions. In making your legacy plan, be intentional about what's important to you and what's worth supporting with your time, talents, and wealth.

Once you've covered your basic financial needs, you can move on to considering the mark you want to leave on the world. The first place to start when thinking about a legacy is to answer a deceptively simple question: What gives my life purpose? Discovering what inspires and excites you will lead you to ideas for incorporating your passions into your legacy.

For many Americans, charitable giving and volunteerism are key parts of their personal identities. These forms of philanthropy encourage you to engage with your values, your families, and your community. Look at the causes you already support and see what they have in common. Consider whether focusing your philanthropy might best support your values and strategically build your legacy. Use these passions and values to create a vision for the impact you would like to have in your community and family.

Being intentional about how to express your values can lead to new possibilities in your legacy strategy. For example, Gary suggests creating gifts for specific uses, such as a "Fun Fund" for your children and grandchildren to spend on travel and little luxuries. This way of earmarking gifts can guide your inheritors toward pursuing the experiences that you would like to give them. Such planning can help you feel reassured by knowing that the people and causes you care about will be supported by your wishes.

Use Your Legacy to Build Bridges Between Generations

Most families find it difficult to talk about money, especially when it comes to potential inheritance. While parents and grandparents may worry that talking about wealth may breed dependence or sabotage their children's independence, research suggests that frank conversations about money are critical to your family's long-term financial health.

When Gary received her inheritance in her twenties, she understood that she was expected to give the money back to the community through entrepreneurship or philanthropy. Rather than become dependent on family wealth, she used it to become a passionate philanthropist, author, and mentor to wealthy inheritors around the country.

There's no right or wrong time to speak to your family about money, but our opinion is that sooner is better than later. Gary recommends letting children know as early as possible what and how they might expect to inherit. She says: "It's important to be candid and forthright because you don't want to undermine their ambitions or give them the illusion that they will inherit a lot of money." She strongly believes in setting expectations for future inheritors through conversations about legacy plans and is grateful to her parents for being upfront about their expectations.

One means of opening a conversation about inheritance and legacy is through the discussion of what change you can make in the world as a family. Furthermore, engaging in philanthropy as a family activity can help you communicate your values and expectations around money. Gary suggests, "Families can use philanthropy as a way to learn about each other and build respect for each others' values and passions in life."

Is Giving a Value in Your Family?

76% of charitable donors learned about giving from their parents

94% of donors are teaching their own children to give

65% of donors say that they discussed giving plans, charity selection, and philanthropic planning with their families at least twice in the last year

39% of donors make charitable decisions with input from family members

Research suggests that the best way to pass down philanthropic values is to explicitly discuss charitable giving with your children. A 2013 study found that conversations about philanthropy had a greater impact on charitable giving among children than role modeling alone. The study also found that talking to your children about charitable giving increases the likelihood that they will give to charity by 20%. If financially supporting a valued cause is something you would like to continue as a part of your legacy, consider bringing your family along to charitable events or fostering discussions around the issues that are important to you. By engaging your family, you may be able to amplify your impact and inspire them to appreciate and support the good work of your cherished causes.

Speak to a Financial Advisor about Your Legacy

As financial professionals, it's part of our duty to understand your values and priorities in life.

Our goal is to help you achieve the financial freedom to think about higher priorities, and we want to do our part to help you explore your motivations and create a more purposeful life.

One of the main reasons that we encourage you to involve us in your legacy goals is that we can help you incorporate these objectives into your financial strategies. Whether you wish to make annual gifts to charitable causes or want to leave a substantial inheritance to your children, we can help you put your legacy into action.

If philanthropy is one of your goals, making charitable giving an explicit part of your financial strategies can create opportunities for tax savings that may then increase the amount of money you can donate to valued causes.

We can also help you connect with your loved ones about your legacy. We strongly recommend including spouses, children, and other close family members in the legacy-planning process. On a practical level, introducing them to your financial professional can help smooth the transfer of wealth and ensure that they have the financial advice they need. On a more fundamental level, actively including your family in your legacy decisions can help build stronger relationships and communicate your values around money. We can help you involve your loved ones by hosting family meetings or mediating family discussions.

If you would like support during your journey towards a more purposeful legacy, we would be delighted to help you:

- Explore your values and create a family mission statement;
- Develop your personal legacy and a vision for your family's future;
- Meet with loved ones to discuss your goals;
- Identify the right structure for your giving and create a philanthropic strategy that fits your needs;
- Understand how planned giving can fit into your existing financial strategies.

In our experience, one of the greatest benefits of working with professionals is the confidence of knowing that you have a team of caring experts on your side. We enjoy working with clients to define their personal values and create lasting legacies for their loved ones and the causes they care about.

Sources Available Upon Request

Get Started on a Family History Project

There are many reasons to embark on a family history project: to find your family's place in history, to develop a closer connection to your family's roots, or to learn more about distant ancestors. Whatever your personal reasons for tracing your family's history, it can be a wonderful way to build a stronger family identity and document your unique heritage.

Start With What You Know

Your personal memories of the most recent generations are the first place to start. Write down as much as you know about your generation as well as your parents' and grandparents' generations. Scour your family possessions for photos, family scrapbooks, military records, and any other documents that can give you vital information about your relatives.

Write Down Everything

Once you have some basic information about your family, get it organized using a family tree chart or genealogical software. Paid services like Ancestry.com and FindMyPast.com can make it easy for you to add information as you go and share your findings with others. Once you have your information organized, you can more easily identify what you don't know yet and begin filling in the blanks. Keep a running list of the information you're missing and the records you've searched so that you don't retrace old ground.

Get Your Relatives Involved

Family members can be a great resource for tracking down family history, documents, and all the stories and trivia that make up your family wisdom. Using your notes, ask family members for information about specific relatives, including name variations, nicknames, occupations, places they lived, and any birth or death information they may know.

Older relatives are literal eyewitnesses to family history, and their stories are very valuable to your project. Don't just ask about people, places, and dates; engage them about their past and document their memories. You can learn more about developing an oral history of your family by reading the **Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide**, available for free online.

Leverage the Internet

Many of a family researcher's best tools are available online. You can access US census records dating back to 1790 with the click of a button. You can also access many property and military records online. Paid subscription sites like Ancestry.com and Genealogy.com have vast digital collections of historical documents. They allow you to enter the names of relatives and find birth records, property ownership documents, and other historical details.

Use the Power of Your DNA

Depending on your level of desired privacy and willingness, you might be interested in using your genetic information to trace your ancestry to delve deeper into your family's ethnic roots. Recent technological advances have made it possible to mail in a sample and have your DNA analyzed. Companies like FamilyTreeDNA and AncestryDNA may help you find connections within their vast databases and trace the movements of your lineage around the world. *We do not endorse any of these companies and encourage you to carefully review the privacy policy of these services if you choose to participate.*

A genealogical project is a wonderful way to build bridges to the past and pass down your family's history to your children and grandchildren. As you get started in your research, think about how you will share what you find: through a scrapbook, a Facebook group, or even a family blog.

AROUND THE OFFICE



BikeMS 2017

Thank you for supporting our BikeMS team! We have raised more than \$88,000 in the past 7 years, which is used to help improve the lives of people living with MS through programs, services and research. We had a few rain showers this year, but it didn't dampen the fun we had on the ride.



Helping Financial Planning Students

Marc Shaffer and John Fales participated in the ninth annual Career Day held by the Financial Planning Association of Greater Kansas City. Students are able to meet with companies in the area as well as learn from the professionals during seminars and panel discussions. John was chosen to speak on the "Breaking into the Profession" panel where students learned about preparing for the CFP® exam, finding a job, and the importance of internships.

Community Involvement

1 in 8 households in the US have difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all of their members. We spent some time volunteering with Harvesters - The Community Food Network, whose mission is to feed hungry people today and work to end hunger tomorrow. Not only do they help feed a 26-county area in MO and KS, but they store food, water, and cleaning supplies that can be sent to a disaster site, such as the hurricane-hit areas, on short notice. If you would like to get involved with Harvesters, visit www.harvesters.org.



QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

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