



"Your Employees' Success is Our Business"

How to Set up a Household Budget

The first step to home budgeting is putting a system in place to keep track of where money is being spent and where it can be saved. The best way to save money and manage household finances is to establish a budget so that income and expenses can be clearly monitored. A budget ensures that bills are paid on time, household expenses are covered and savings goals are set and achieved.

Step 1: Prepare

Collect all receipts in a box for one month. A shoebox is ideal. If no receipt is issued note the date, item and amount on a piece of paper and include with the other receipts. At the end of the month, divide the receipts into appropriate groups (groceries, books/magazines, CDs/DVDs, drink/snacks, outings/entertainment etc).

List regular expenses, including all weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly payments. These will include bills such as telephone, gas, electricity, water, rent, mortgage, insurance, etc.

Select an appropriate budget format. It is easiest to work on a monthly cost basis, so all income and expenses should be multiplied or divided to fit this calculation. A weekly expense should be multiplied by 52 (weeks in the year) then divided by 12 (months of the year) to get a monthly equivalent figure. A quarterly bill should be divided by 3 to get a monthly amount etc.

Step 2: Assess

Income and expense totals can now be compared. Assess where changes need to be made in spending habits to create a workable budget that will balance and achieve any savings or debt repayment goals. Divide current expenses into categories:

NECESSITIES (utilities, rent/mortgage, insurance) – These bills are a fact of life and can't be avoided. Shop around to get best deal to limit these expenses as much as possible.

ADAPTABLE – haircuts, groceries, entertainment and activities. These are necessary expenses that can be modified more easily to fit in with budget restrictions. Groceries are necessary, but there are less expensive alternatives for most items and some stores have lower prices than others. Allowances need to be made for children's sporting/extra-curricular activities, but it is sometimes necessary to limit the number of activities undertaken.

EXPENDABLE – Doing without some luxury items in the short term can have a big impact on balancing a budget, especially if aiming to pay off debts and/or achieve savings goals. Limit these purchases to ensure long-term financial stability. Expensive clothing and jewelry, regular meals at expensive restaurants, pay TV and regular CD or DVD purchases can all be excluded from the budget or limited to an occasional "treat."

Step 3: Implement

Draw up a new budget form showing your planned allowances for each category. Be practical. A previous grocery bill of \$250/week, is unlikely to be reduced to \$100/week overnight. To provide motivation to stick with the new budget, have a specific short-term and long-term goal.

Reassess the budget after one month, making any adjustments that are necessary. Assess again after three months. If preparing a budget seems too daunting a task to tackle alone, call AssistNOW at 216.431.4140. We can help!

Source: personalbudgeting.suite101.com

Employee Assistance Program Services Newsletter

FALL 2008

Do's and Don'ts of Assertive Behavior

DO

- ⇒ Do begin being assertive in low-risk situations. Start small.
- ⇒ Do acknowledge your strengths and the situations you handle well.
- ⇒ Do learn to reward yourself. Praise yourself for any success.
- ⇒ Do learn to assess a situation and respond appropriately.
- ⇒ Do learn from mistakes.
- ⇒ Do learn to take satisfaction from the simple act of expressing your need and/or feelings.

DON'T

- ⇒ Don't expect instant success.
- ⇒ Don't expect that you will always get what you want.
- ⇒ Don't beat up on yourself.
- ⇒ Don't put yourself down.
- ⇒ Don't expect other people to necessarily love your assertive behavior.
- ⇒ Don't dwell on failure.
- ⇒ Don't expect to be guilt and anxiety-free.

Source: Peggy Kordic, LISW
AssistNOW



Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships

The day-to-day reality of many families is different today than a generation ago. Family members spend far less time together and adults often face an ongoing struggle to balance the demands of their families and their jobs. While these pressures can cause parents to participate less in their children's lives, there remains a great need for them to be involved in their children's education.

Recent studies show that when families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, the children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, and demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior. Reports also indicate that families who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not receive this kind of communication.

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and develop, and good schools value parental involvement. The foundation for good parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication, mutual respect and a clear understanding of what is best for each individual child. If you need to talk with someone about building a good foundation for your child, call AssistNOW at 216.431.4140, we can help!

Source: www.naeyc.org

Five Basic People Skills Everyone Should Know

The number one reason that people succeed in business, or fail, is because of *people skills*. People skills boil down to an ability to get along with a wide range of people, the great majority of time. Listed below are five basic people skills that everyone who wants to succeed should implement:

1. Don't prejudge people based on appearances or on what somebody else has told you about them. Give everyone a chance to define or explain him or herself.
2. Be a great listener. Commit to listening two thirds or more of the time. Not only will this be pleasing to others, but you will learn something.
3. Avoid using extreme language. Sound moderate by saying, "I think," "perhaps," or "possibly" instead of "I know" and "definitely," unless you really do know, or it really must seem definite at that moment.
4. Thank people incessantly. Show your appreciation even more than you think you should.
5. Praise the good and always offer a solution if you're going to identify a problem. Don't be a complainer.

These five skills will take you far in your career and in life. You may find that putting them to work does more for you than any technical information you have at your command. To find out more about people skills, call AssistNOW at 216.431.4140.

Source: www.customersatisfaction.com

Fuel Savings Tips

With gas prices exceeding three dollars a gallon, we all need to look at ways to save gas. Millions of dollars worth of gasoline is wasted every day by motorists, because simple and inexpensive vehicle maintenance is neglected. Loose or missing gas caps, under-inflated tires, worn spark plugs and dirty air filters all contribute to poor fuel economy.

The following are some gas saving maintenance and driving tips that really work:

⇒ **Vehicle gas caps** - About 17 percent of the vehicles on the roads have gas caps that are either damaged, loose or are missing altogether, causing 147 million gallons of gas to vaporize every year.

⇒ **Under inflated tires** - When tires aren't inflated properly it's like driving with the parking brake on and can cost a mile or two per gallon.

⇒ **Worn spark plugs** - A vehicle can have either four, six or eight spark plugs, which fire as many as 3 million times every 1,000 miles, resulting in a lot of heat and electrical and chemical erosion. A dirty spark plug causes misfiring, which wastes fuel. Spark plugs need to be replaced regularly.

⇒ **Dirty air filters** - An air filter that is clogged with dirt, dust and bugs chokes off the air and creates a "rich" mixture - too much gas being burned for the amount of air, which wastes gas and causes the engine to lose power. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10 percent, saving about 15 cents a gallon.



Remember,
for confidential assistance call:

AssistNOW

The EAP Division of
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216.431.4140

1.800.840.4654