

# Financial issues and food

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**Financial problems cause stress and can have a significant impact on your mental health. For some people, the financial pressures of life may seem impossible to overcome, but you can get help and take steps to improve your situation.**

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## What is financial stress?

Financial stress occurs when debts build that you are unable to pay. Situations that might cause financial stress include losing your job or being retrenched, being long term unemployed, being unable to get full time work, or not being able to deal with the increasing costs of living.

Worrying about money is not uncommon, however, if it is affecting your health and relationships or is developing into anxiety, it is important to seek help.

## Feeding your family

There are many ways to stretch your budget such as buying in bulk and meal planning; however on occasion, you may need additional support. Community organisations like the Salvation Army (1300 371 288 — business hours only) can help with providing food hampers and 'soup kitchens' can provide you with a hot meal for free to help ease your burden.

## Impact of financial stress

Financial stress can significantly impact your health and your relationships with others. Some key signs of financial stress include:

- arguing with the people closest to you about money
- withdrawing from people
- feeling angry or fearful
- mood swings
- tiredness
- muscle pain
- loss of appetite
- lower sex drive
- worrying a lot or feeling anxious
- headaches
- feeling generally unwell
- being afraid to open the mail
- difficulty sleeping
- feelings of guilt about spending money on non-essentials.

Call  
Lifeline on  
**13 11 14**  
if you need  
to talk



## Signs you may need help with your finances and debt:

- struggling to feed yourself and your family
- paying bills late or seeking extensions
- missing credit card payments or only affording the minimum payment
- spending less money on necessities e.g. food
- increasing debt from credit cards or loans
- receiving legal action for debt recovery
- fear of eviction by being behind in rent or loan repayments
- income does not cover expenses

## Reducing financial stress

There are various ways to reduce your financial stress and to get help.

Start by calculating your budget. There are many online tools that can help with this, such as Money Help [www.moneyhelp.org.au/tools-tips/budget-planner/](http://www.moneyhelp.org.au/tools-tips/budget-planner/). If your budget allows, set aside a small amount of money in a savings account each month for future emergencies — every little bit helps. If your ongoing bills and expenses exceed your income, consider:

- Contacting a financial counselling service for free, confidential help.
- Contacting the people/organisations you owe money. Tell them you are having difficulties and ask for time to work things out. Make progress payments and set up a payment plan. Many services are happy to give you payment extensions if you call them. If you don't get a helpful response speak to the Hardship Team of the lender or provider you are dealing with.
- Approaching a welfare service in your area for help with bill payments e.g. power, gas, phone.
- Approaching community organisations that provide free food hampers or free meals.
- Getting emotional support if you are feeling overwhelmed mentally or emotionally. Talk to a friend, family member, your GP, counsellor or a helpline like Lifeline.

## Financial stress and mental health

When debt builds up and there appears to be no way out, sinking into a depressed or anxious state is a very real danger. Depression is more than just feeling sad or low, it is an illness characterised by a persistent low mood, lasting more days than not for at least two weeks. People dealing with depression may also be more irritable, have changes in sleep or appetite, be fatigued or have a loss of energy, have decreased concentration, or thoughts of suicide. It can last months or even years. Anxiety is the excessive, uncontrollable and often irrational anticipation of future threats. It is more than just worrying. It is an illness characterised by shortness of breath, feeling on edge, restlessness, muscle tension, sweating, sleep disturbance and possibly upset stomach.

If you are not coping with financial stress and have any negative emotional responses, then it is important to seek help.



**Financial stress can impact many aspects of your life, but there is help available. Do not ignore overdue bills and accumulating debt. Get help as early as possible.**

## Where to go to for support?

Below are some of the places to go for information and support:

- **Contact Lifeline:** 13 11 14 (available 24/7) or Online Crisis Support Chat (available nightly at [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au))
- **Salvation Army:** 1300 371 288 — Business hours only
- **Centrelink** — a crisis payment may be available: [humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment](http://humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment)

For local services and centres in your area, including emergency accommodation and food relief services, visit the Lifeline Service Seeker Directory at [www.lifeline.serviceseeker.com.au](http://www.lifeline.serviceseeker.com.au)



**Are you struggling to feed yourself or your family?**

**When financial pressures arise it can become difficult to feed yourself and family. Some tips that can help are:**

- stick to a budget
- buy in bulk when items are on sale
- meal plan and only buy what you need for those meals
- contact community organisations that can help with supplying food.



**Phone 13 11 14 | [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)**

**Call Lifeline on 13 11 14 (available 24/7) if you are feeling suicidal or in crisis or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) to connect online with our Crisis Support Chat (available nightly), find a range of other useful factsheets and to find local services in your area.**

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