

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Becoming F.I.T.—Financially In Tune

(NAPSA)—Your financial health doesn't have to keep you up at night.

Do you worry you're not saving enough for retirement, your children's education, or an emergency fund? Do you feel you just have too many financial obligations?

A sound fiscal program will address your financial concerns, helping you secure a comfortable future for yourself and your loved ones. As with any fitness program, striving for long-term results and not a quick fix is the key to success.

Ready to flex your money muscle? These simple steps from HSBC's Center for Consumer Advocacy can guide you down the path to fiscal health.

Step 1: Get a Checkup—Review your credit reports, current savings and retirement programs and your insurance coverage to see what changes you'd like to make. In the same way that experts recommend you see a doctor before beginning a physical fitness program, it's a good idea to assess your current financial situation before beginning a fiscal fitness program.

Step 2: Set Personal Financial Goals—Identify the things you'd like to be able to afford down the road, what they'll cost

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STEP 1: GET A CHECKUP

Check your credit report and review current financial and insurance plans before beginning a fiscal fitness program.

STEP 2: SET PERSONAL FINANCIAL GOALS

Identify your goals (e.g., saving for retirement, paying for a college education, buying a home).

STEP 3: BEGIN YOUR WORKOUT PROGRAM

Your program should include a plan for both saving and spending.

STEP 4: MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

Check in regularly to make sure you're on track.

CELEBRATE A FINANCIALLY HEALTHY YOU!

Visit www.yourmoneycounts.com for more information and ideas.



and when you'll need the money to pay for them. Group your goals by time frame—short, medium and long-term—and identify those that are the most important so you can focus on them first.

Step 3: Begin Your Workout Program—Start by creating a

plan for accomplishing your goals. A financial plan is more than just a wish list; it's one part planning and one part follow-through. You'll discover that budgeting, saving and investing are essential to financial planning.

When establishing a budget, be sure to include a savings component as part of your regular "expenses." Your budget should be manageable and incorporate small rewards for reaching your goals. As your savings grow, consider opening a separate savings or investment account for each major goal. Also, find out if your employer or bank can automatically transfer a predetermined dollar amount or percentage of each paycheck into different accounts. That makes saving easier, and you won't be tempted to spend money you had intended to dedicate to your goals.

Step 4: Monitor Your Progress—Check regularly to make sure you're on track. If you're not, you'll need to review your budgeting and saving strategies for new opportunities.

For more information, including practical tips on budgeting, investing and saving, visit the Center's Web site at www.yourmoneycounts.com.