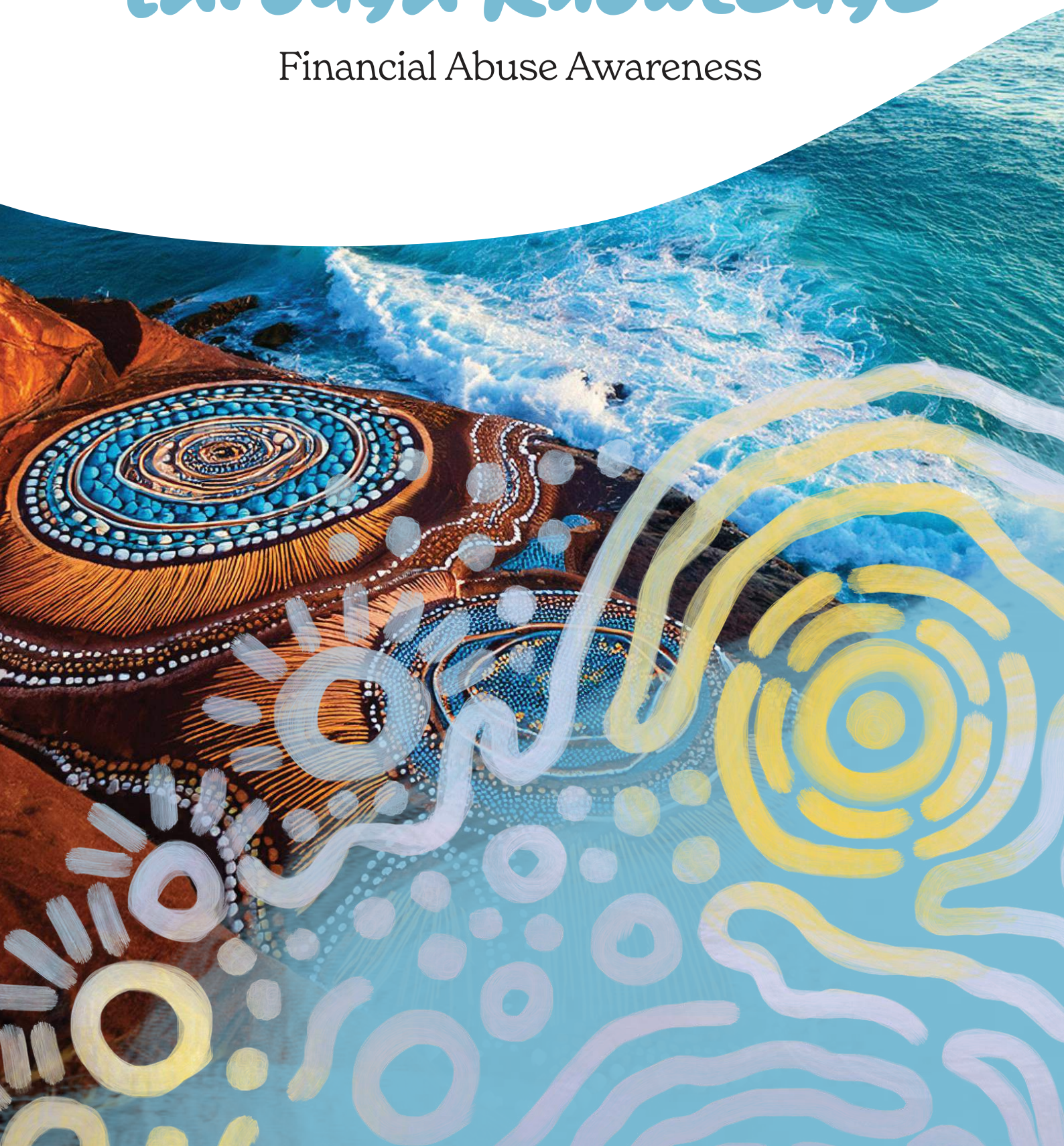




Empowerment through Knowledge

Financial Abuse Awareness





This booklet is a powerful tool, equipping you with the knowledge to recognise and address financial abuse, empowering you to take control of your financial well-being.

Where to get help

If you're worried about your immediate safety, call **000**.

Djirra: 1800 105 303

Lifeline: 13 11 14

13YARN: 13 92 76

Aboriginal Legal Service: 1800 733 233

CommBank Next Chapter: 1800 222 387

For Elder abuse help, call:

Compass: 1800 353 374

For debt help, call:

National Debt Helpline: 1800 007 007

Mob Strong Debt Help: 1800 808 488

13 YARN: 13 92 76



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Self-awareness and self-advocacy are empowering tools that can help you regain control of your financial future. Recognising your cultural strengths, balancing economies and understanding financial abuse are all part of this journey. Be sure to reach out for support along the way - you are not alone.

Are you ready to start your journey to financial freedom?





Understanding your power

Before we delve into more topic-focused areas, Let's take a moment to acknowledge our Elders and Ancestors, who have fought tirelessly to get us to where we are today.

Their resilience and strength should inspire us all. As proud blak women, we stand on their shoulders, and we should honour and appreciate the women who have resisted and endured to create change within this country for more opportunities as blak women.

1897


From 1897, under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (and subsequent laws until the 1970s), the Queensland government controlled the wages and savings of Aboriginal Queenslanders working under these acts. We are all familiar with stolen wages, and you often hear stories about how our grandmothers grew up hungry and malnourished as a direct result of not being paid their full wages and entitlements.

1962

It wasn't until 1962 that Indigenous women won the right to vote in federal elections. In 1967, Aboriginal women and men were only just recognised as citizens in our own country.

1972

The first Aboriginal Women's Council was formed in 1972. The right to equal pay was only granted in 1974, and this does not even cover stolen wages, which we are still hearing about today because it is unfinished business.





1990

In 1990, Lowitja (Lois) O'Donoghue, a Pitjantjatjara woman, was elected as the first chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), a Commonwealth statutory authority and the peak representative body for our people across this country.

2011

In 2011, Professor Megan Davis, a Cobble Cobble woman, was the First Aboriginal woman elected to the United Nations Economic and Social Council to discuss Indigenous issues.

2016

In 2016, Linda Burney, a Wiradjuri woman, became the first Indigenous woman elected to the House of Representatives.

These women lead
with strength, power
and the resilience
of our Ancestors
behind them.





Healthy relationships and money

Let's overcome the money shame and build our confidence in having tough conversations about money.

Talking to your partner about money

Talking about money can be overwhelming. Make sure that you feel safe and comfortable before having these conversations. Having these conversations helps one another understand each other's financial situation, short-term and long-term goals, and overall attitude towards money. Regardless of any economic situation, being honest, open, understanding, and respectful of each other is key.

3 steps to a healthy and abundant relationship:

1 Determine where you are both financially
To understand where you both are at, start creating a budget. Combine both of your:

- ★ **Income** (Include Centrelink payments and Child Support Payments)
- ★ **Expenses** (Include both needs/wants)
- ★ **Assets** (e.g. Cash, House & Car)
- ★ **Superannuation & Investments**
- ★ **Debts & Loans** (e.g. Credit Card, Buy Now, Pay Later, Car Loan or Personal Loan.)

2 Align your long/short-term financial goals
This is an excellent opportunity to agree on your relationship and financial goals. Do you want to buy a house? Start a family? Get married? Go on a holiday? These are things to consider while determining your financial goals.

Use a savings calculator like **MoneySmart.gov.au** to plan how to achieve these. Be realistic, and do not overcommit.

3 Do a budget & savings plan
Now that you've determined your financial position and goals, it's time to create a realistic and comfortable budget.

Tips to remember when doing a budget:

- ★ **The 50/30/20 Rule:** Spend 50% of income on needs, 30% on wants, and 20% on savings or paying off debt.
- ★ **Automate everything:** Determine if you can afford to prepay any bills, consider a separate account for bills only, optimise due dates for all bills and schedule payments.
- ★ **Track your progress:** Be realistic – do not over-commit.

Other ideas

★ Ice Breaker Questions

Don't be shamed, and start the conversation. What would you do if you won the lottery? What was your greatest childhood gift?

★ Set up a Date Night

Set a time for, say, the first Monday of the month to sit down and talk about money, bills and what else is coming up.

What is financial abuse?



Financial abuse is when someone controls another person's access to money or resources.

This may include dictating how money is spent or taking another person's money away from them.

We often see financial abuse in intimate partnerships, but it can also occur in a number of different types of relationships, such as parent/child relationships, grandparent/child relationships or friendships. It can also happen in a broader family by several people who've learnt the behaviour from others.

It can be hard to recognise financial abuse because the abuser may be clever and use subtle forms of manipulation. For example, a husband may tell his wife he needs to look after the money because she is not very good at it.

As a form of family violence, financial abuse often occurs alongside emotional or physical abuse, but that's not always the case.



Here are just a few examples of financial abuse:

- ★ Someone may 'check' how much money their partner is spending, such as looking in their wallet or at receipts and telling them off over what they've bought.
- ★ One person may control all of the household money and only give their partner an allowance.
- ★ A person may gamble away their family's money.
- ★ Someone may tell another family member, such as an Elder, to take out a loan for them.
- ★ A partner may not contribute towards the household at all.
- ★ Someone may get you to bail them out of difficult financial situations.
- ★ A person may threaten to lie to government services and claim you are cheating or misusing benefits.
- ★ Someone may interfere with your job or not allow you to go to work or work in a field of work that you want to work in.

These situations are not normal, they are not OK and help is available.

It's not your fault!

If you're experiencing financial abuse, it's not your fault! it can happen to anyone and help is always available.



Spotting the warning signs

How common is financial abuse?

Unfortunately, financial abuse is common in both the First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Research shows more than one in six women experience financial abuse.

However, it may be even more common than we think. We know that a lot of people who experience financial abuse don't report it, which makes it difficult to say how often it actually happens.

It's important to know that people from all walks of life experience financial abuse. Some victims are wealthy, while others aren't as well off. Similarly, it can happen to younger and older people; men and women and people from many different cultural backgrounds.

“We know that a lot of people who experience financial abuse don't report it, which makes it difficult to say how often it actually happens.”

Financial abuse in First Nations communities can take many different forms, which makes it tricky to spot. However, there are some common warning signs.

1. Has someone asked for a record, such as receipts, showing how you spend your money?
2. Has someone told you to leave your job when you don't want to?
3. Has someone taken your money without your permission?
4. Has someone told you they need to look after the family finances because you're not good at it or can't be trusted?
5. Has someone given you an allowance (when you're an adult)?
6. Has someone set a budget for you without giving you equal input?
7. Has someone gambled away money that is supposed to be for you or your family?
8. Has someone threatened to take away money if you behave in a certain way?
9. Has someone taken out a loan in your name or spent money on your credit cards?
10. Has someone refused to give you their share of money for looking after children?

For Elders:

1. Has someone been trying to get you to change your Will?
2. Has someone gone into your bank account or another money stash without your permission?
3. Has someone pressured you to give them money?
4. Has someone pressured you to co-sign a loan or a legal document?
5. Has someone forged your signature?

The key drivers to family and financial abuse

Family and financial abuse can often stem from a mix of factors like financial challenges, employment struggles and intergenerational trauma.

Domestic & family violence (DFV) – Includes any behaviour in intimate or family relations that is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling. The behaviour is usually part of a pattern of controlling coercive behaviour.

Financial Abuse – Financial or economic abuse involves controlling, exploiting, or sabotaging someone's finances and resources, limiting their financial security and independence.

Family and financial abuse are serious problems that can have a significant impact on people's lives. Knowing what drives these issues is essential to tackle these issues effectively.

Here's a breakdown of the key factors:

1. Power & Control

★ **Imbalance in relationships:** Abuse often stems from one person trying to control another. This could mean controlling their actions, decisions, money.

★ **Financial independence:** If someone relies on their partner for money, it can give the other person a lot of control over their life. This makes it much harder to leave an abusive relationship.

2. Cultural & Social Expectations

★ **Gender roles:** In some cultures, there's an expectation that men should be in charge and women should follow. This can make abusive behaviour seem more acceptable or harder to challenge, especially when it comes to controlling money.

3. Money Problems

★ **Financial stress:** When people are struggling financially, stress can arise, leading to abusive behaviour as a way to cope with stress or maintain control over whatever resources are available.

★ **Lack of financial knowledge:** If someone doesn't know much about managing money, they're more vulnerable to financial abuse. An abuser might take control of their finances, leaving them with little or no say in important decisions.

4. Family history

★ **Cycle of abuse:** Sometimes, people who grow up in abusive environments might see that behaviour as normal and either become abusers themselves or tolerate abuse in their own relationships.

★ **Trauma:** Unresolved trauma can play a part, and some abusers act out due to what they experienced as a child or previous relationships.

5. Lack of support

★ **Isolation:** Abusers often try to isolate their victims from friends, family and other support networks. Isolation can make it harder for victims to seek help or even recognise that they are being abused.

★ **Limited resources:** Sometimes victims don't have access to the resources they need to escape an abusive situation, like money or legal help.

Who experiences financial abuse?

Financial abuse can happen to anyone no matter your age, gender, cultural background or ability. Many people who have experienced family and domestic violence have also experienced financial abuse.

Where to find help

If you or someone you know is experiencing financial abuse, you can call **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**, or text **0458 737 732**. You can also call the CommBank Next Chapter team on **1800 222 387**.



Elder financial abuse

Elder financial abuse involves someone taking inappropriate control of an older person's money.

When we get older, we all become a bit more vulnerable. Often this means we have to rely on other people—sometimes to do things like pay our bills or buy our groceries. Unfortunately, in some circumstances, people take advantage of this vulnerability. For example, an Elder may give their child \$50 to buy groceries. Usually, the child would give their parent the right change. Abuse occurs if they keep the change without their parent knowing.

Like other forms of financial abuse, Elder abuse can be very distressing for the person involved. Sadly, research tells us that Elder abuse is often committed by someone who is trusted by the Elder.

It's important to know that Elders have rights and abuse can be dealt with.

Examples of Elder Abuse:

1. Taking money from the bank accounts of an older person.
2. Asking an older person to change their Will.
3. Taking jewellery or other expensive items from an older person.
4. Gaining power of attorney—which is control of someone's financial decision making—when the older person is still capable of making their own decisions.
5. Removing cash from an older person's wallet.
6. Not paying bills of an older person when trusted to do so.
7. Not properly caring for an older person. For example, they may not have clean washing or proper meals when in someone else's care.

What to do if you think you're a victim of Elder abuse:

As always, if you're in danger, call **000**.

If you've identified the person responsible for the Elder abuse, speak to a trusted friend or family member for support, or contact one of these support services for personalised help:

UnitingCare Elder Abuse Helpline: **1300 651 192**

My Aged Care: **1800 200 422**

(A government service for people in aged care)

Elder Rights Advocacy: **1800 700 600** (This service can tell you more about your rights)



Cultural obligations and responsibilities

First Nations people often see wealth differently from the broader community, prioritising sharing resources with their community over personal savings or over their own interests.

FNF's 2019 Money Stories Report highlighted the financial challenges faced by First Nations people, showing that 52.5% of Indigenous respondents had no savings, compared to 13.5% of the general population. This suggests that managing immediate financial and family needs is often more important than planning for future financial issues.

Dealing with humbugging

We've all been there, we've worked hard, finally got paid and then Mob ask us for a loan that sometimes we'll never get back.

How do we honour our boundaries whilst upholding cultural obligations to take care of our Mob? Honouring your boundaries is to be treated the way you want to be treated and getting reciprocated respect. I know that sometimes it's so hard and in some cases it's non-negotiable, but I just want you to know that by honouring your boundaries, you empower others to do the same.

Honouring your boundaries means:

1. It's ok to say no

2. Create a realistic budget that works for YOU first.

If you have enough in your budget for others after your bills are paid and money is saved then work it into your budget.

3. Be HONEST!

4. Goals You must set those goals! Having goals allows you to see the bigger picture and save towards something that will benefit you in the long run!

5. Have discipline Hold yourself accountable along with others – sometimes we may be the ones who humbug.

6. Be patient – You must practice patience.

7. Self Care – Incorporate self-care. You work hard, you deserve to reap the rewards too, even if it's just treating yourself once a week!

8. Consistency – You must follow through with what you say you're going to do.

9. Flexibility – You must adjust when necessary.

How to protect yourself

1. Don't share your card or PIN.

2. Choose a PIN or keyword that you can remember but others don't know.

3. Check your bank statements via online banking regularly so you know what's coming in and out.

4. Set up a savings account, a secret account, or put aside a certain amount that you can afford to lend.

5. Have a look at the video below on some tips for managing humbugging: tomorrowmoney.co/new_article/money-tips-from-mobmanaging-humbug-pt-2







Preparing the right documents

If you're in a financially abusive relationship and are planning to leave it, one of the first steps people often take is preparing the right information and documents.

Documents to prepare:

Identity documents—this may include your:

- ☐ Driver's licence
- ☐ Birth certificate
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Medicare card
- ☐ Other important cards including a Seniors, Centrelink or Pension card, if you have one.

Financial documents and cards:

- ☐ Bank, debit and credit cards
- ☐ Loan documents, if you own your property/car
- ☐ Rental agreements, if you rent your property/car
- ☐ Household rates, if you own your property
- ☐ Car registration papers
- ☐ Car insurance papers
- ☐ Home insurance documents
- ☐ Court orders or protection orders, if applicable
- ☐ Marriage documents
- ☐ Any letters to debt collection agencies
- ☐ Tax returns
- ☐ Superannuation fund information
- ☐ Sentimental items or valuables or photographs.

Other:

- ☐ Phone numbers of police, support services and friends
- ☐ A record of your phone messages
- ☐ A record of emails.



Important

If you are experiencing family violence, you can seek personalised advice about how to prepare your exit. When you are in a safe place, you can call **1800 RESPECT**. If it's an emergency, call **000**.

Getting support to Recover Financially

If you've left a financially abusive relationship, you may be feeling a whole bunch of different things.

You may be relieved, you may be scared or you may be stressed. All of these feelings, and any others, are normal. There are a few steps you can take in your first weeks and months away from your partner to set yourself up financially.

Financial abuse can continue after separation or divorce

For some people, this may mean a partner:

- Not paying child support.
- Not paying their share of debts.
- Taking money from your shared bank accounts.
- Hiding things that belong to both of you.

☐ Change your PIN number and passwords

If you have your own bank account, starting fresh after financial abuse is often a time to change your bank account PIN number and email and phone passwords. For your banking, you can often do this through a phone call to your bank or by visiting a branch and showing them some identity documents.

☐ Set up a secure bank account

A safe bank account is a place you can store money to protect it from your ex-partner. Some people set up safe accounts before they leave a relationship. The idea is that the account is secure and hidden and can only be accessed by you. You can speak to a bank about setting up a safe account or can get more information by contacting a free financial counsellor on **1800 007 077** or CommBank Next Chapter on **1800 222 387**.

☐ Speak to a financial counsellor

A financial counsellor can help you to come up with a plan for your specific situation. The great news is this is a free service. Call the National Debt Helpline on **1800 007 007**. Despite the name, the helpline doesn't just look after debt. A counsellor can help you with a range of things, from starting a new bank account to setting up your super.

☐ Find your support network

Having a group of friends and family members from your community you can talk to makes a huge difference. Choose a few people to call on when you're struggling. You may wish to assign a trusted buddy who you speak to about money matters.

Please note: If you're struggling, you can always call Lifeline on **13 11 14**.



Money matters and mental health

Many people experience economic challenges that make it difficult to achieve financial stability. This struggle can intensify mental health issues, while creating a cycle that's hard to break.



The association between money and mental health is complex. On one hand, having enough money can provide a sense of security and stability, which can help reduce stress and improve mental health. On the other hand, having too much money can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression and guilt, which may be due to family and community pressures to share your money. This could leave you feeling less of a connection to culture if you're not sharing with your family and community.

The key to maintaining good mental health is to find a balance between having enough money to meet your needs and having enough money to enjoy life. For many, the thought of their own financial position and budgeting can be overwhelming and create anxiety/stigma around the topic of money.

It's important to recognise when financial stress is becoming too much and take steps to reduce it. This may include talking to a financial counsellor or advisor, creating a budget, or seeking professional help. You should not feel ashamed or embarrassed to talk about your financial situation.

Many resources are available to help people manage their finances and improve their mental health.

Remember that money is not the only source of happiness, and financial security does not guarantee mental health. Having meaningful relationships, pursuing hobbies, and caring for your physical and mental health are all important for overall well-being. Taking the time to focus on these things can help reduce stress and improve mental health.

People should ensure they care for their mental health, regardless of their financial situation.

Tips to deal with financial stress:

- ☐ **Look after your health** (eating healthy, exercising).
- ☐ **Create a budget** for yourself to follow that includes regular savings. You can do this for free with FNF's online My Money Dream program. Register at **www.mymoneydream.com.au**
- ☐ **Speak to family and friends** about how you're feeling, if safe to do so. Keeping a positive mindset and having a good support network is essential.
- ☐ **Learn good money habits** – visit **www.tomorrowmoney.co** or join the Indigenous Women's Financial Wellness Facebook group by visiting **www.bit.ly/IWFW-FB**
- ☐ **Contact your bank** – Most banks have policies to assist customers when they experience financial distress or hardship.

Financial Wellness – Your overall holistic financial health

- ★ **MENTALLY**, you want to achieve financial wellness – you want the mindset that you are abundant, capable & educated.
- ★ **SPIRITUALLY**, you want overall financial contentment – to be at ease and comfortable.
- ★ **PHYSICALLY**, you want financial freedom – you and your family.

“It's important to recognise when financial stress is becoming too much and take steps to reduce it.”

Get support

13 YARN

13 92 76

National crisis support line for Mob feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. Lifeline-trained Crisis Supporters are available 24/7.

Mob Strong Debt Help

1800 808 488

Free nationwide legal advice and financial counselling service for First Nations people.

National Debt Helpline

1800 007 007

Trained financial counsellors offering free advice. Live chat available.

Lifeline

13 11 14

National charity offering personal crisis support & suicide prevention. Available 24/7 via SMS on **0477 131 114** or live chat.

CommBank Next Chapter

1800 222 387

Free confidential referrals and support for people experiencing financial and/or domestic and family violence.

About First Nations Foundation

We are a successful First Nations financial wellbeing foundation led by a First Nations majority board since 2006. We have a trusted reputation with both financial and First Nations community sectors, a powerful track record of results, agility and innovation.

We work with First Nations communities and the finance industry to provide customer centric financial education, training and information.

To learn more about us visit
firstnationsfoundation.org.au



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My Money Dream

bit.ly/MMD-Journal

