

# MONEY AND YOUR HEALTH

Are financial worries stressing you out? See the connection between your brain, your body and your bank account

**A**S WE enter the second month of 2016, we must remember to look after our bodies to ensure that we're healthy, productive and able to earn an income. Without our health, we cannot work.

"Financial and interpersonal stress can exacerbate the conditions of people who are coping with existing health problems," the American Psychological Association says.

The relationship between physical and financial health is clear to most people as your physical health is often a mirror of your financial health and the other way round.

For most South Africans, their financial situation is the main cause of daily stress.

Our finances can cause us stress for many reasons: problems caused by an inability to manage debt, lack of savings, failure to make provision for children's education, substantial healthcare costs and or despair when considering retirement due to low-value plans or lack of planning.

This stress can lead to many severe side effects such as depression, anxiety, migraines, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers and heart disease. It can also stimulate unhealthy coping behaviours like drinking, smoking and overeating.

## MONEY WOES AND YOUR HEALTH

Money is more than just cash and coins. It provides feelings of security, power, independence and freedom. While it's not easy but it's important to try to remain positive and in control. It's also important to be happy and live within your means.

And while we can't assume we're an obese nation due to financial stress, it's a reasonable assumption that because obesity is often stress-related, a significant number of South Africans are overeating to cope with financial stress.

## CASH-FLOW PROBLEMS AND WORK

Health and money problems can affect your productivity and ability to focus on work, and when working with machinery this can pose a danger to fellow workers. Stress therefore contributes to higher absentee

rates in the workplace, as employees seek ways to resolve their issues, and in the worst cases can result in dishonesty and crime.

But, when faced with a situation where you could be tempted to be dishonest, consider the potential consequences to your health, family and finances if you lose your job, get a criminal record or face imprisonment. Remember, South African courts are getting tough on employee crimes.

A few companies offer holistic financial wellness programmes, which also look at your personal finances. Companies that do provide this benefit have found employees' stress levels have improved, as have their productivity and focus, and there's been a reduction in resignations.

It might be helpful to find out if your company has such a programme.

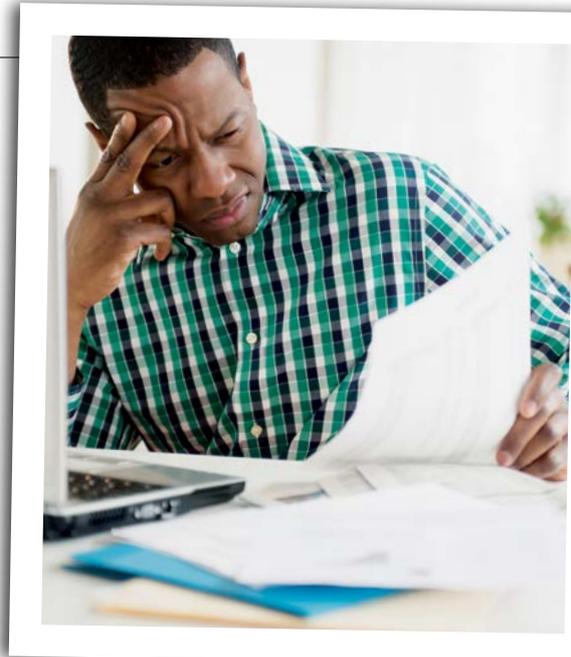
## THE EFFECT ON CHILDREN

You're not the only one who feels the effects of financial stress. Children are quick to notice tension and anxiety in the household, even if they don't completely understand the root causes.

Although most parents' first instinct is to shield children from stress, experts advise keeping the lines of communication open, giving age-appropriate explanations and empowering children to develop solutions to family problems. Remember, how you deal with financial challenges can have a profound impact on your children.

## SIGNS OF STRESS

Be alert for children who display changes in sleep or appetite patterns, increased irritability or signs of isolation. These can all indicate anxiety that children don't know



how to articulate. You, as a parent, might also be tempted to withdraw because of your own anxieties in times of financial stress, but it's not advisable.

Instead of focusing on your own worries, set up a regular time to reconnect with your child. Set aside 30 minutes a day to play, read stories or go to the playground. Reconnecting with your child shouldn't cost you anything.

## WAYS TO RECOVER

Changing habits by eating well and exercising are a continuous journey. Commit to doing a continual review of your finances to help diagnose problem areas and make the necessary adjustments.

Both good financial health and physical recovery require discipline and commitment. This might involve changing your lifestyle. While getting your financial situation in order won't automatically improve your health, it will set the tone for a more positive physical and financial future.

## GET HELP

A competent certified financial planner (CFP) can help you take control of your money. Some offer low-cost or even free assistance through financial outreach programmes, such as The Financial Planning Institute's MYMONEY123.

If you do not have a financial planner already, find a CFP professional near you or verify their designation at [www.fpi.co.za](http://www.fpi.co.za) or call 0861-000-374/011-470-6000. ■



## OUR EXPERT

Gerald "Mr G" Mwandiambara, is an award-winning financial planning professional, financial services executive and wealth manager with extensive international experience. Catch Gerald on Soweto TV on The Money Show on Wednesdays at 6.30 pm (repeats Saturday at 9.30 am).

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