

FEBRUARY 2019

6 Expenses to Cut Immediately If You Lose Your Job



Date/time to schedule: Tuesday, February 5 @ 7:00 p.m.

Preheader Text: It's important to keep all kind of financial tools in your tool belt.

Facebook Share Text: While this isn't exactly an "uplifting" financial article, we believe it's our job to provide you with financial tools both in plenty & in want.

Body Copy:

Losing your job unexpectedly can be emotionally and financially devastating, but unfortunately it's something that's a potential reality for all of us. Whether your job loss is the result of downsizing, or a company-wide layoff, how you react to the situation can determine the impact on your bottom line.

In a recent *usnews.com* article, contributing writer Trent Hamm points out 6 expenses to cut immediately after a job loss.

1) Netflix, Spotify & other streaming services

These types of services can be fun time-wasters, but they're easily replaced by listening to the radio and checking out movies from the library. Streaming services are a direct drain on your finances. If you're really excited about a particular program on a streaming service, use that as motivation to find employment. Just promise yourself you'll restore the service and get caught up on missed episodes and movies as soon as you find a new job.

2) Dining out

When you're unemployed, you have plenty of time to prepare less expensive meals at home. Preparing your own meals is a great frugal strategy. Not only does it save money in the moment, as meals at home are almost always less expensive than their restaurant equivalents, but cooking at home builds skills that make it easier to continue that money-saving practice once you return to the workplace.

3) Services you can do yourself

Instead of hiring others to complete tasks such as changing the oil in your vehicle, washing the car and mowing the lawn, do them yourself. Simply stop using those services (or cancel any regular services you have) and take on those tasks on your own. Again, you'll have an abundance of time, and you can always start using these services to save time again when you've found a new job.

4) Cable TV

This is a great time to cut the cable cord and cancel your cable service. You can get an inexpensive digital antenna and hook it up to your television to get as many as 25 digital channels for free, and you can supplement that by checking out movies from the library for free.

5) Gym & club memberships

If you have an active membership in a gym, country club or some other local group, let it expire rather than renewing it again. To replace the gym membership, you can get exercise on your own at home using body-weight exercise and jogging and running anywhere you'd like. To replace the country club membership, start participating in other civic groups to maintain many of the same social connections.

6) Small treats

Many people fall into routines of stopping for treats every day. They get coffee at the coffee shop, stop for a snack on their way home from work or get some other treat on a frequent basis. Once your routine is disrupted with the job loss, it's a great time to rethink those treats and perhaps eliminate them. If you're not driving by the coffee shop or the fast food drive-thru, maybe that will make it easier to drop those expensive routines from your day.

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

5 Habits to Help You Stress Less about Your Finances



Date/time to schedule: Sunday, February 17 @ 7:45 p.m.

Preheader Text: #3 & #5 are the easiest, in our opinion.

Facebook Share Text: Some of these require behavior changes (and may be a little painful), but #3 & #5 are super easy to implement, in our opinion.

Body Copy:

According to the American Psychological Association, money is the top cause of stress in the U.S. For many of us, what begins as a passing thought to remember to pay the bills can suddenly leave you worried about how you'd pay those bills if you lost your job, how to climb out of debt, or how to make your budget stretch for the month.

If the topic of money leaves you in a cold sweat, the good news is you can absolutely put yourself in control of your financial thoughts and actions. Taking control of your finances can help greatly decrease your money worries.

In a recent *mint.com* article, contributing writer Jackie Lam shares 5 tips to help you stress less about your finances.

1) Adjust your tax withholding — Do you normally receive a large tax refund every April? The average refund in 2018 was \$2,895, which works out to more than \$200 per month. Adjust your withholding so you're taking more money home from every paycheck. To adjust your withholding, request a new W-4 from your Human Resources department and determine the proper number of allowances you should claim using [the IRS calculator](#).

2) Start a surprise fund — A surprise fund is money that you conveniently forgot you had. While not intended to be as robust as your emergency fund, a surprise fund can help smooth out any small hiccups you may face money-wise. Look into "set-it-and-forget-it" methods. By setting your savings on autopilot, that's less mental energy you need to spend on making everyday decisions. Plus, you'll be making steady headway without having to lift a finger. Even if you sock away \$5 a week, that's \$260 you can tap into should the need arise (and it will). Up your weekly auto-save amount to \$10 a week, and that's \$520. That could help cover your bills or pay for groceries during a particularly lean month.

3) Negotiate your bills — Internet, cable, cell phone and auto insurance are service providers that are willing to adjust their pricing in order to keep customers. It costs them far more to land a new customer than it does to keep a current one happy. Research the lowest going rate for these services before you call, that way you know where you stand. And don't be afraid to walk away if the provider isn't willing to budge.

You can also ask for discounts based on group affiliation. For instance, you may get a discount on your cell phone for being, say, a card-carrying AAA or AARP member, or being affiliated with the military or a university.

4) Cancel unused subscriptions — It can be easy to forget about the services we have signed up for, especially since so much is subscription-based these days. Look through your credit card and account statements and hunt for unnecessary services you're still paying for and call to cancel. Also, look for services you're doubling-up on. Do you really need a subscription to three different gaming platforms, or will only one do? Or let's say you have a gym subscription and are also part of a local softball league. If you're getting sufficient exercise by playing softball, you might be able to cancel your gym subscription.

5) Check your bank balance — Ever feel blindsided by how much you've been spending — or rather, how little you've been saving? Avoid costly overdraft fees and feeling cash-strapped by month's end by checking your balance regularly. It only takes a minute but could help keep you mindful of how much you have in your account(s).

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

How Paying Attention to Detail Saves Your Finances



Date/time to schedule: Wednesday, February 27 @ 10:45 a.m.

Preheader Text: Small changes = BIG results

Facebook Share Text: Ever wonder if you've overpaid for something and missed it? Or if you could be getting a better deal and simply don't realize it? This article may give you some ideas of where to check for possible money savings/gain.

Body Copy:

We live in a multitasking, ultra-connected, hyperactive world that constantly demands our attention.

Unfortunately, not giving sufficient attention to truly important things in our lives (such as our finances) can cost us money in the long run.

In a recent *wisebread.com* article, contributing writer Tim Lemke explains how each day, we have the potential to lose money simply because we aren't paying attention.

We pay too much for items because we don't notice how much they cost. We lose money in fees or other charges because we don't read the fine print on documents. Below, Lemke points out 7 ways that paying attention to detail can help save your finances.

1) You'll know a good deal when you see one

If you pay close attention to what items cost, you'll know when you see a good deal. Even if you are not shopping for a specific item, take time to look at its price. That way, when the time comes to make a purchase, you'll have a sense of whether you may be overpaying. If you are keenly aware of pricing, you may learn which retailers consistently have the best deals and which stores to avoid.

2) You'll notice when a cashier makes a mistake

When you pay cash at a store, be sure to count your change before you leave. Take care to remember what bills you handed the cashier. If the math doesn't make sense to you, don't be afraid to let the cashier know. In addition, be sure to review your receipt to ensure you weren't accidentally charged more than once for an item.

3) You'll see the "catch" when there is one

Congratulations! Your cable company just gave you free HBO. But did you notice that it's only for three months, and then you'll be charged the full monthly fee? Is that "free" cellphone really free, or did they roll the cost into your monthly bill? Whenever a deal appears to be too good to be true, it usually is. Read the fine print on anything you sign and be aware that rarely is anything truly free.

4) You'll know what's covered by insurance

Insurance policies are complicated. You may think you're covered for certain things when you aren't. You may be covered for things you aren't aware of. Always be sure to read your policy so that when bad things happen, you feel confident that you're properly insured. And be sure to update your insurance plans if your life circumstances change.

5) You'll notice errors in your credit report

By law, you are permitted to get one free copy of each of your three credit reports — from TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian — every year. Even if you have no intention of borrowing money, it's good to review your credit reports because they may have incorrect information about your finances. Your credit reports will also alert you if you may have been a victim of identity theft.

6) You'll be billed correctly

Have you ever been to the car mechanic and received a multi-page, itemized list of the work performed? Have you ever been billed by a doctor's office and seen a list of unfamiliar charges? Sometimes bills can show a lot of charges that you weren't expecting. It's best to review these bills and identify each charge. If you don't understand something or an item seems unfamiliar, don't pay the bill until you get an explanation. You should never pay a bill without reviewing the charges first.

7) You will pay the right amount of tax

It's crucial to be organized and detail oriented when filing your taxes. Mistakes on your taxes could end up in you paying too little tax, resulting in penalties. Or, you could end up paying too much tax if you're careless. When claiming deductions, be sure to have proper documentation to justify them so you avoid getting in trouble with the IRS.

[Click here to read the full article.](#)