



From Struggle to Stability

**7 STEPS TO BREAK FREE FROM PAYCHECK-
TO-PAYCHECK LIVING**

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7 Step Process

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SET UP (AND FOLLOW) YOUR BUDGET

Welcome

It's your time and you are ready!

If you are here, you're tired of the constant stress of living paycheck to paycheck and you want things to change. Whether it's because of debt obligations like student loans, living beyond your means, or because you aren't aware of where your money is going, money struggles can definitely lead to sleepless nights.

You are not alone! 78% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, and that is at all income levels. So it's not about how much money you make; it's about how you manage the money that you have.

But here's the good news: according to a survey by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) people who are financially literate are 70% more likely to reach their financial goals. All you have to do is learn some basic money skills to be well on your way to ditching the paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle for good!

And here's some more good news...



It's not just about the numbers in your bank account—it's also about how you think and feel about money and *yourself with money*. This is fantastic because it means you have more power and control over your financial situation than you may think.

You can train your thoughts to help you develop a positive relationship with money that will lead to easily attracting...money!

In this eBook, I will share seven proven steps you can take to stop living paycheck to paycheck, laying that foundation of financial literacy, while also integrating powerful money mindset tools to help you create lasting change. By combining money education and practical steps with money mindset tools, you will have what you need to transform your financial situation and lead to a more secure, prosperous future!

01

Step 1

CREATING YOUR DREAM MAP

Mapping Your Life Goals

Breaking free from the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle is not just about financial survival; it's about creating a life that reflects your dreams and aspirations. Your Dream Map is a tool that helps you visualize where you want to go in life, both in the short term and the long term. It connects your financial goals to your bigger life ambitions, giving you a clear picture of what you're working toward.

The Dream Map Activity

This activity helps you identify your dreams, both near and far, and builds a tangible roadmap for achieving them. Set aside time in a quiet space with this workbook or a journal to complete this reflective exercise.

Why Your Dream Map Matters

Creating your Dream Map is a vital part of escaping the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle because it gives you a clear purpose for why you're improving your finances. With a tangible vision for both your short-term and long-term future, you'll stay motivated to make smarter financial decisions and invest in yourself. Your Dream Map transforms your abstract desires into achievable goals, giving you the blueprint for a financially secure and fulfilling life.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Reflect on Your Current Life

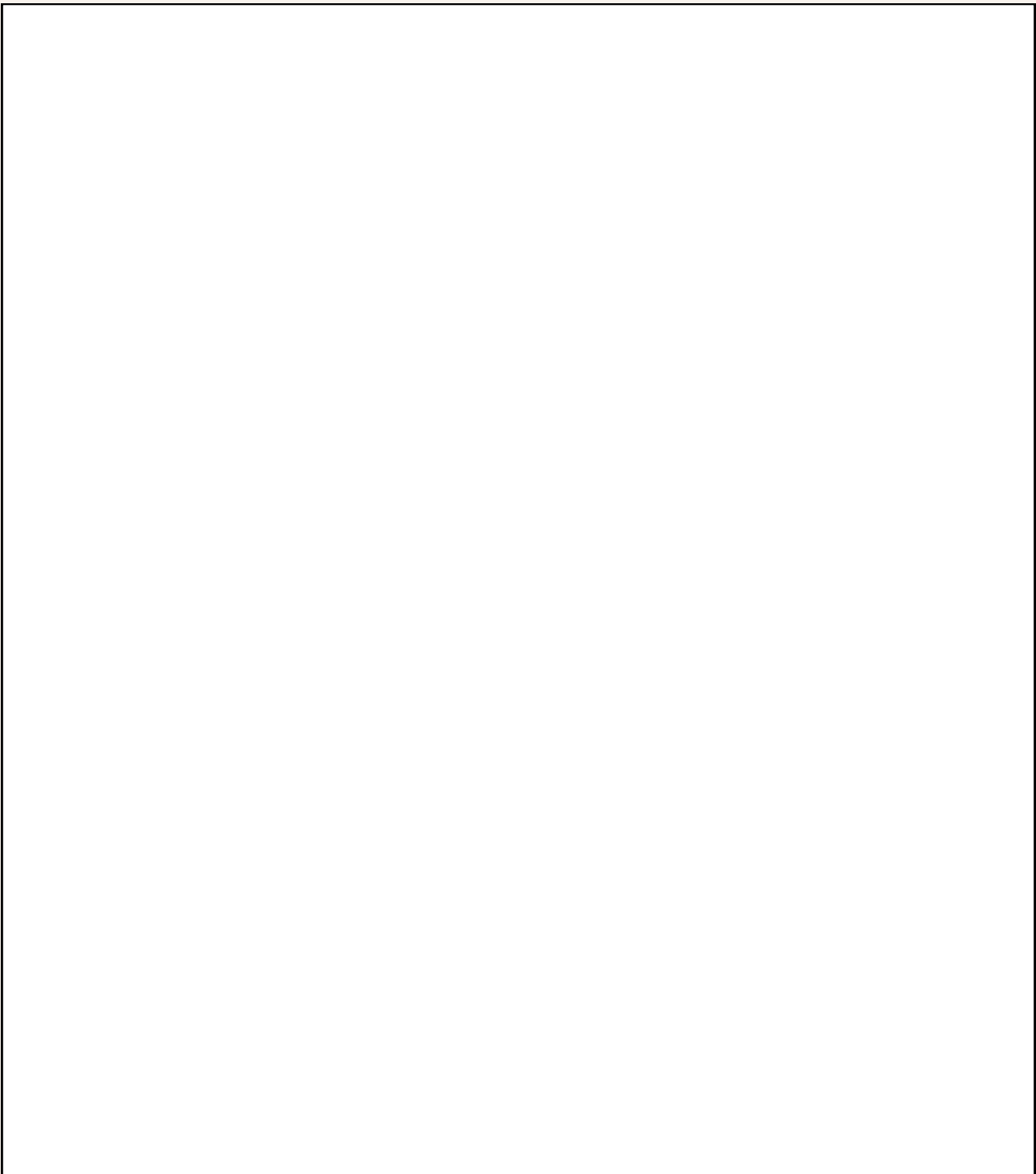
Take a few moments to think about your current life circumstances. Ask yourself:

What are you most proud of?

What aspects of your life feel unfulfilled?

Where do you feel stuck or limited?

Tip: Be honest and open during this reflection; the more truthful you are with yourself, the clearer your goals will be.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their reflections on their current life circumstances.

Identify Short-Term Dreams

1-3 YEARS

Write down 3-5 short-term dreams or goals you want to achieve in the next few years.

These can be related to:

Career: Earning a promotion, starting a new business, learning new skills.

Personal Finance: Paying off debt, building an emergency fund, saving for a vacation.

Relationships: Strengthening relationships with family, friends, or finding a mentor.

Wellness: Improving physical or mental health, building a daily routine, or finding a hobby.

Identify Long-Term Dreams

3-5+ YEARS

Now, think about your long-term dreams for your life. These are bigger aspirations that may take several years to achieve. Write down 3-5 long-term goals, which could include:

Financial Freedom: Achieving a certain net worth, retiring early, buying a home.

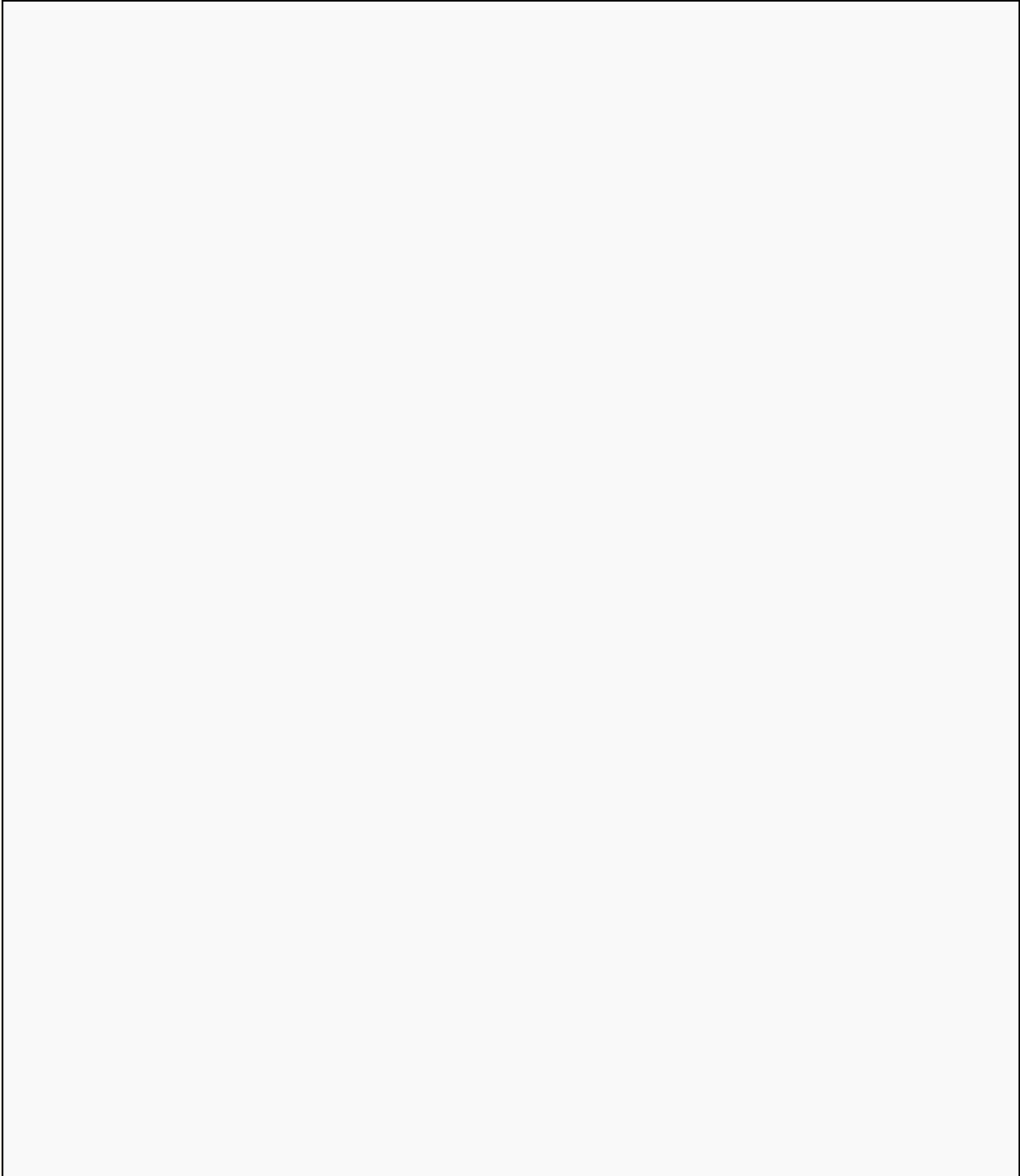
Personal Growth: Earning an advanced degree, writing a book, or learning a new language.

Legacy: Starting a charity, mentoring others, leaving a financial legacy for your family.

Visualize Your Dream Map

Create a visual Dream Map with images, drawings, or digital collages to represent each of your goals. Use pictures that inspire and motivate you to stay focused. You can do it right on this page, on a separate poster board, or even digitally (make it your screensaver!)

Tip: Vision boards or Dream Maps can serve as a daily reminder of where you want to go and why you're working hard to improve your financial situation.



Money Mindset Tool: Think Big. Act Small.

Encourage yourself to dream without limits, but take small, practical steps every day to get closer to those dreams. Affirmations like "My dreams are achievable, and every step I take brings me closer to the life I envision" can keep you focused and motivated.



02

Step 2

CONDUCT A FINANCIAL AUDIT

Why You Need a Financial Audit

The number one reason people overspend is that they aren't tracking their spending. *They are winging it.* If you want to get your financial life in order, you need to know where your money is going.

Take action now. Follow the instructions on the next page and fill in the workbook pages for step 2.

This may be the most challenging of all the steps in this process, but...you *can* do this. Stay the course, be kind to yourself, and I promise you, things will feel better on the other side.



*“Whether you think you can, or
think you can’t - you’re right.”*

~ Henry Ford

Financial Audit Steps

STEPS 1-6

01

Income

List Your total Income:
Write down all sources of income (salary, side hustle, etc.).

02

Fixed Expenses

List out all your fixed expense categories and associated monthly payments in the workbook. Fixed expenses are ones you pay the same amount every month. If it's a fixed annual expense, divide the total by 12 to get the monthly amount.

03

Variable Expenses

List out all your variable expense categories in the workbook. These are expenses that fluctuate from month to month.

04

Total

Input your total for the fixed expense category into the designated space in the workbook.

05

Estimate

For your variable expenses, estimate how much you think you spend per month for each category and record it in the 'Estimate' column.

06

Actuals

Now look at your accounts (debit card, credit cards) for the last 3 months and add up spending for each category. Divide the total by 3 to get an average monthly number. Enter these figures into the workbook under the 'Actual' column.

Financial Audit Steps

STEPS 7-9

07

Total

Input your total for the variable expense category (actuals) into the designated space in the workbook.

08

Compare

Compare your estimates to your actuals. Were your estimates close? Which categories surprised you the most?

09

Take Action

Write down three actions you can take right now to streamline your spending, based on this information.



Income and Expense Worksheet

Total Monthly (Net) Income: \$

Total Fixed Expenses \$

MONTHLY FIXED EXPENSES

Expense
Category

Expense
Amount

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Income and Expense Review

ANALYZE AND REFLECT

Phew! You did it! Now that you have written down what you are spending your money on and how much you are spending relative to your income, take a few minutes to analyze the data and reflect on it.

What did you notice?

What surprised you?

Were any of your estimates and actuals close?

Did you estimate your spending accurately?

Write down your thoughts and aha's..

Income and Expense Review

ACTION PLAN

Write down three actions you can take right now to streamline your spending, based on the information in your reflection.

01

02

03

Money Mindset Tool: The Power of Contentment

Practice contentment with what you already have. Shift your focus from constantly wanting more to appreciating what you've already accomplished. Use affirmations like: "I have everything I need to live a fulfilled life, and I choose to be content with what I have."

Tip: Channel the money you save by living below your means into savings, investments, or paying off debt.



SET UP YOUR EMERGENCY FUND

Why You Need an Emergency Fund

Do you remember the fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper?

The grasshopper fiddles away his summer while the ants spend it gathering food for the cold, winter months. When winter arrives, the grasshopper has nothing to eat and he starves.

You are not able to predict what emergencies may occur in the future, but you can prepare for it. If you don't have an emergency fund and disaster or the unexpected strike, you are more likely to use a credit card, which keeps you in the debt cycle.

An emergency fund is also not just a financial safety net—it's a mindset tool that promotes peace of mind. Knowing you have savings set aside for unexpected situations reduces financial stress and helps you feel in control of your life.

An emergency fund is a non-negotiable. You need one. Let's get you set up!

“Save for a rainy day.”

~ Aesop



Set up Your Emergency Fund

Open a Savings Account

- Your emergency fund should have an account all its own!
- Keep It Separate: Place your emergency fund in a separate account to avoid spending it unintentionally. This will help you mentally separate the fund from your daily spending.
- High-Yield Accounts (HYSA): Use a high-yield savings account to grow your fund faster with better interest rates than a regular savings account.
- Make sure the bank you choose allows for transfer to your regular bank account. You *do* need access to your money in an emergency.

Fund Your Emergency Fund to \$1000

- Since an emergency fund is a non-negotiable, you must make it a financial priority.
- Automate Savings: Set up automatic transfers from your checking to savings.
- Look at your financial audit and identify subscriptions to cancel. Be sure to increase your automatic transfer to capture the amount you are now saving, so that it goes directly into your emergency fund (and not towards your next latté!
- Make it a game. Hunt for money in your house. Start a side hustle doing something you love!
- Declutter and Sell: Go through your home and sell items you no longer need on platforms like eBay, Craigslist, or Facebook Marketplace. Use the money from these sales to add to your emergency fund.

Grow Your Emergency Fund

- A fully funded emergency fund should contain between 3 and 6 months of living expenses. However, if you have credit card debt, you should focus your money on paying off that 'bad' debt before you go all-in funding your emergency fund.
- Make sure that when you create your budget, your emergency fund is a category. All expense categories that fund your security and future should be a priority. In other words, fund your emergency fund *before* you fund your Netflix subscription.

Money Mindset Tool: Abundance Affirmations

Affirm that there is always enough. Use statements like: "I am building an emergency fund with ease, and I trust that I will always have more than enough for unexpected expenses." This helps remove the fear of scarcity.

Tip: Keep your emergency fund in a separate, high-yield savings account to avoid spending it impulsively.



04

Step 4

DECIDE WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU

...and Ditch the Rest!

Look, I get it. When you're living paycheck-to-paycheck, cutting expenses may seem daunting, especially when you feel like every dollar is already spoken for. However, one of the most effective ways to gain control over your finances is to reassess what truly matters to you. This process is often called *values-based spending*—focusing on what brings the most value and joy to your life and cutting back on everything else. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you approach cutting expenses through this lens.



Decide What is Most Important to You

IDENTIFY YOUR CORE VALUES

Identify Dream Map Patterns

In the first step, you created a dream map. Review that map now and look for patterns that can help you identify your core values. Core values represent what is most important to you in life. They serve as the foundation for how you live and interact with the world. For some people, core values may include family time, experiences over material goods, health and wellness, or financial security. For others, it could be travel, personal growth, or career advancement.

Identify what brings you joy and fulfillment

What are the things or experiences in life that bring me the most happiness, fulfillment, or peace?

Identify Your Financial Priorities

What are my financial priorities (e.g., saving for the future, paying off debt, building an emergency fund)?

Align your Core Values with Your Long-Term Goals

How do I want to spend my money in a way that aligns with my long-term goals?

Cut Everything Else

Review Your Fixed and Variable Expenses

Look at your Financial Audit worksheets. Enter in the lists below the expenses that you will cut out completely and the ones that you will renegotiate or look to reduce because they don't align with your core values.

Ditching it!

Reducing or
Renegotiating

Commit To Your Core Values

Write down three expenses you will either ditch or reduce/renegotiate this week. For instance, you might cancel one streaming subscription, commit to tracking and reducing the money you spend on dining out, and call the cable company to see if you can reduce your package or get a better rate on the package you have.

Check in with Yourself

How are you feeling about these changes? Write down what thoughts and feelings come to mind, as well as how it feels physically in your body. Take a deep breath and tell yourself, "Right now, I am fine. I am responsible with my money. I have plenty."

Money Mindset Tool: From Scarcity to Value- Based Spending

Instead of focusing on what you're giving up, focus on what you're gaining. Ask yourself, "Does this expense add long-term value to my life?" Make spending decisions from a place of value rather than fear of scarcity.



05

Step 5

FUND YOUR RETIREMENT

Save, Invest, Grow

I put this step before the budgeting step because you need to pay yourself first. Before you sit down to create a budget, having a clear understanding of what is at stake, as well as your options for saving and investing for retirement is critical.

Just a little over half of Americans have a retirement fund. It's also true that Social Security is not enough to live on, if it's even available in the future.

I'm going to get real here. You cannot sweep this under the rug. It may feel insurmountable. So why bother, right?

Wrong.

Building an emergency fund and cutting expenses are crucial steps in achieving financial stability. But what comes next? To truly set yourself up for long-term financial freedom and retire comfortably, you need to *save*, and you need to invest your savings. By starting early and taking advantage of compound interest, you allow your money to grow exponentially over time.

“Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it; he who doesn't, pays it.”

~ Albert Einstein

Save, Invest, Grow

The Power of Compound Interest: Why Investing Early Matters

Compound interest is the process where your investment earnings generate additional earnings. Essentially, it means your money makes more money. The earlier you start investing, the more time your money has to grow and multiply.

How Compound Interest Works

- When you invest money, it earns a return. For example, if you invest \$1,000 in a fund that yields an average annual return of 7%, you'll have \$1,070 after one year.
- In the second year, your \$1,070 continues to earn 7%. Instead of earning \$70 like the first year, you now earn \$74.90 because you're also earning interest on your previous earnings.
- This cycle continues, with your money earning interest on both your original investment and all the interest accumulated over time.

The longer you let compound interest work for you, the more powerful its effect. Starting early can turn relatively small, consistent contributions into substantial wealth by the time you retire.

Example: Starting Early vs Starting Late

- Investor A starts investing \$200 per month at age 25, with an annual return of 7%. By age 65, they will have contributed \$96,000, but thanks to compound interest, their investment will have grown to over \$500,000.
- Investor B waits until age 35 to start investing \$200 per month. By age 65, they will have contributed \$72,000, and their investment will be worth around \$230,000.
- Investor C starts at age 45 with the same monthly contribution. By age 65, their total will only be about \$98,000.

This example illustrates how time is a crucial factor in growing wealth. The earlier you start, the more your money can work for you.

Save, Invest, Grow

The Stock Market: A Proven Path to Wealth Building

Historically, the stock market has been one of the best ways to build wealth over the long term. While the market can be volatile in the short term, it has consistently grown over extended periods.

Historical Stock Market Gains

- Over the last century, the stock market has returned an average annual gain of around 7% to 10%, depending on the specific period and the index measured (e.g., S&P 500).
- Despite market downturns and economic recessions, the market has always rebounded over time, rewarding those who stay invested for the long haul.
- Investing regularly in a diversified mix of assets (such as stocks, bonds, ETFs, and index funds) can reduce risk and provide steady growth over decades.

It's Not Insurmountable: How Regular Investing Builds Wealth for Retirement

Many people feel that saving enough for retirement is an overwhelming task. However, by starting early, investing regularly, and focusing on the long term, it becomes not only manageable but achievable.

How to Get Started

- **Take Advantage of Employer-Sponsored Plans: If your employer offers a 401(k) plan, contribute enough to at least get the full employer match—it's essentially *free money*.**
- **Automate Your Investments:** Set up automatic transfers from your bank account to a retirement account (like an IRA) each month. Treat this as a non-negotiable expense, just like your rent or mortgage.
- **Diversify Your Investments:** Spread your investments across various assets (index funds, bonds, ETFs, etc.) to reduce risk and improve returns.
- **Stay the Course:** The stock market will experience ups and downs. Avoid the temptation to sell during downturns. Remember, investing is for the long haul, and staying invested allows you to benefit from eventual market recoveries.

Money Mindset Tool: Visualize Your Money

There's nothing quite like visualizing the outcome you want to anchor it in your mind. When it comes to saving and investing your money, take a minute each morning to close your eyes and visualize your money physically multiplying. It's totally up to you what that looks like. Once it's anchored in your mind, it can shift how you think about money and investing. Soon you will see all the opportunities to save and invest that you missed before!





Step 6

CREATE YOUR DEBT PAYMENT PLAN

Why You Need A Debt Repayment Plan

Getting out of debt is a crucial part of achieving financial freedom. Setting up a strategic debt repayment plan helps you systematically tackle your debts while minimizing interest costs. There are so many benefits to setting up (and following) a debt repayment plan:

- Reduce Financial Stress
- Avoid Late Fees and Penalties
- Minimize Interest Costs
- Accelerate Debt Payoff
- Boost Your Credit Score
- Regain Financial Control
- Free Up Cash for Other Financial Goals
- Prevent the Debt Spiral
- Develop Better Financial Habits
- Provide a Clear End Goal

One of the biggest benefits of a repayment plan is that it sets a target date for when you'll be debt-free. Having a clear end goal keeps you motivated and focused, providing a tangible reason to stick to your plan and celebrate milestones along the way.

“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Debt Repayment Plan

Gather All Your Debt Information

List All Debts: Collect information about each debt, including:

- Creditor's name (e.g., credit card company, loan provider)
- Total balance owed
- Interest rate
- Minimum monthly payment
- Due date

Use a spreadsheet or a debt tracking app to keep all this information in one place. I've set up a tool for my Smart Savings Society students to track debt repayment with visuals to show your progress.

Choose a Debt Repayment Strategy

- *Debt Snowball Method*: Focus on paying off the smallest debt first while making minimum payments on all other debts. Once the smallest debt is paid off, roll that payment into the next smallest debt. This method provides quick wins and builds motivation.
- *Debt Avalanche Method*: Prioritize paying off the debt with the highest interest rate first while making minimum payments on the others. This method saves you the most money in interest over time.
- *Debt Consolidation*: If you have multiple high-interest debts, consider consolidating them into a single loan with a lower interest rate. This can simplify payments and potentially reduce your total interest cost.
- *Hybrid Approach*: Start with the debt snowball method for small, motivational wins, then switch to the debt avalanche method to tackle high-interest debts.

Note: Loosely determine how much beyond the minimum payments you can make on one card. Use that information in the next step as you create your budget. You may need to revise this number as you pull your budget together. Come back to this step when you know your target monthly payment amounts to ensure that you are documenting your goal and setting up the necessary automatic monthly payments.

Debt Repayment Plan

Set up Automatic Payments

- **Make sure you have finalized your budget (step 7) then come back to this step.**
- **Minimum Payments:** Set up automated payments for at least the minimum amount on each debt to avoid late fees and maintain a positive payment history.
- **Extra Payments:** For the debt you're focusing on first (according to your chosen strategy), set up an additional payment that goes directly to the principal. This extra payment accelerates debt payoff and reduces the amount of interest you'll pay overall.

Prioritize High-Interest Debt (if Using Avalanche Method)

If you're using the debt avalanche method, direct any extra funds toward the debt with the highest interest rate. This approach reduces your overall cost of borrowing and speeds up the repayment process.

Stay Focused on One Debt at a Time

- Whether you're using the snowball or avalanche method, focus on one debt while making minimum payments on the others. This targeted approach prevents you from feeling overwhelmed and allows you to make tangible progress.
- Once you pay off the first debt, take the money you were paying and apply it to the next debt. This creates a "snowball effect" that accelerates your debt payoff.

Use Windfalls to Accelerate Payment

Whenever you receive unexpected money (tax refunds, bonuses, cash gifts), put a portion (or all) toward your highest-priority debt. This can significantly reduce your repayment timeline.

Reevaluate Monthly

Review your debt repayment plan every month to ensure you're on track. Adjust your budget or payment amounts if your financial situation changes.

Debt Repayment Plan

Celebrate Small Wins

Each time you pay off a debt, take a moment to celebrate your progress. Recognizing these milestones helps maintain motivation and keeps you focused on your ultimate goal of becoming debt-free.

Example: The Snowball Method in Action

- List Your Debts:

Credit Card A: \$1,000 balance, 18% interest, \$50 minimum payment

Personal Loan: \$3,000 balance, 8% interest, \$100 minimum payment

Credit Card B: \$5,000 balance, 20% interest, \$150 minimum payment

- Choose the Smallest Debt: Credit Card A (\$1,000).
- Make Minimum Payments on All Other Debts.
- Allocate Extra Funds: Suppose you have \$200 extra per month to put toward debt. Pay \$250 (\$50 minimum + \$200 extra) on Credit Card A.
- Pay Off the First Debt: Once Credit Card A is paid off, apply the \$250 toward the next smallest debt (Personal Loan). Now, you pay \$350 (\$250 + \$100 minimum) on the Personal Loan.
- Continue the Process: Repeat this process until all debts are paid off.

Final Tips for Success

- *Stay Motivated:* Remind yourself of the financial freedom you're working toward. Use affirmations and celebrate each milestone.
- *Avoid New Debt:* While repaying existing debts, avoid taking on new debts. Use cash or debit cards to ensure you're not adding to your balances.
- *Seek Support:* If you find it challenging to stick to your plan, consider joining a support group focused on debt repayment. You can also consider working with me one on one for focus and support or joining my Smart Savings Society where people with similar financial goals are learning and supporting each other every day!

Money Mindset Tool: Release Shame Around Debt

Many people associate debt with guilt or failure. Shift your mindset by viewing debt repayment as a smart, empowered financial decision. Use affirmations like: "I am capable of managing and eliminating my debt, and I release any guilt associated with it."

Tip: Track your progress and celebrate each milestone, no matter how small.





Step 7

SET UP (AND FOLLOW) YOUR BUDGET

Why You Need a Budget

Now that you have your Dream Map, completed a financial audit, and identified your core values, you're ready to create a budget that reflects your priorities and sets you on the path toward financial freedom.

Many people shy away from budgeting because they perceive it as restrictive and limiting. The idea of tracking every dollar and cutting back on spending can feel like a constant reminder of what they can't afford or have to give up. However, this perspective misses the true purpose and power of budgeting. The reality is that a budget doesn't confine you; it sets you *free*—free to spend money on what matters most to you, free to pursue your dreams, and free to live a life aligned with your values.

Why Budgets Feel Restrictive

Budgets can seem restrictive because they force you to confront your spending habits and make deliberate choices about where your money goes. This process can be uncomfortable, especially when it involves cutting back on things that provide immediate gratification. It's easy to associate budgeting with sacrifice, picturing it as a rigid set of rules that keep you from enjoying life. But this view misses the key aspect of what budgeting is really about.

A Budget is Your Permission Slip

Think of your budget as a permission slip. It allows you to spend on the things that align with your values, whether it's a weekly coffee date with a friend, a gym membership that keeps you healthy, or a savings plan for that dream vacation. It's about intentional spending that brings you closer to the life you truly want.

Setting up Your Budget

Add These Expenses to Your List

- You already listed your fixed and variable expenses in your financial audit, and your debt payments in step 6, so you are ahead of the game!.
- Savings & Investments: Include your monthly savings goal here, such as contributions to your emergency fund, retirement accounts, and investments.
- Dream Map Goals: Incorporate expenses that align with your Dream Map (e.g., saving for travel, education, or a big purchase). This ensures your budget is geared towards reaching your short-term and long-term dreams.

Expense Category	Expense Amount




Setting up Your Budget

Apply the 50/20/10/20 Rule

- You may have heard of the 50/30/20 rule, but it doesn't get to the level of granularity for savings that I like, so I prefer to loosely follow the rule popularized by finance guru, Ramit Sethi.
- 50-60% for Needs: Allocate up to 60% of your income for essential expenses like housing, utilities, groceries, transportation, insurance, childcare, and minimum debt payments.
- 10-20% for Investments: It is important to save and invest for the long-term
- 10% for Savings & Debt Repayment: Allocate at least 10% of your income toward short-term savings like building your emergency fund and other short-term goals, as well as for paying off high-interest debt.
- 20% for Wants: Dedicate 20% of your income to discretionary spending that aligns with your values (e.g., dining out, entertainment, hobbies). Your financial audit and core values will guide which wants are worth keeping.

Modify the Percentages: Depending on your circumstances, you may need to adjust these percentages. For example, if your priority is to build an emergency fund quickly, you might reduce the "wants" category to 15% and increase savings to 15%.

See how your expenses fit with these percentages



Setting up Your Budget

Set Spending Limits for Each Category

- **Use Your Core Values:** As you allocate amounts to each spending category, prioritize those that align with your core values and dreams. For example, if health is a core value, allocate funds for gym membership or healthy groceries.
- **Focus on Value-Based Spending:** Reduce or eliminate spending in categories that don't align with your core values. Use the results of your financial audit to identify where you can cut back.
- **Account for Dream Goals:** Include specific line items in your budget that contribute to your Dream Map goals, such as a vacation fund, education savings, or a down payment fund.

Automate Savings and Debt Payment

- **Automate Savings:** Set up automatic transfers from your checking account to your savings and investment accounts on payday. This ensures you're paying yourself first and prioritizing your future.
- **Automate Debt Repayments:** Schedule automatic payments for debts to avoid late fees and reduce the risk of overspending. Allocate any extra income (e.g., bonuses, tax refunds) toward debt repayment to accelerate progress.

Track and Monitor Your Spending

- **Use Budgeting Tools:** Some people use apps like Mint or YNAB, but I feel strongly that simple spreadsheets are easiest to set up and monitor your spending. In my Smart Savings Society, I share my own budgeting spreadsheets and we walk through setting up your budget together.
- **Check in Weekly:** Review your spending weekly to stay on top of your budget. This gives you an opportunity to adjust as needed if you're overspending in certain areas.

“Do not save what is left after spending, but spend what is left after saving.”

~ Warren Buffett

Setting up Your Budget

Adjust and Refine Monthly

- **Reflect:** At the end of each month, compare your actual spending to your budget. Ask yourself if you stayed true to your values and your Dream Map goals.
- **Make Adjustments:** If you find that you spent more than planned in some categories, identify areas where you can cut back next month. Adjust your spending limits or priorities to better align with your goals.
- **Celebrate Wins:** Acknowledge when you successfully save or make progress towards a Dream Map goal. This positive reinforcement will keep you motivated to stick to your budget.

Include a Buffer for Unexpected Expenses

Set Aside a Buffer: Allocate a small amount (e.g., \$50-\$100) as a buffer for unexpected expenses. This prevents you from dipping into your emergency fund for minor, unexpected costs.

Revisit your Dream Map Quarterly

- **Review Your Progress:** Every few months, revisit your Dream Map to see how your budgeting efforts are contributing to your goals.
- **Adjust as Needed:** Life circumstances and goals can change. Use these reviews to adjust your budget and savings plan to reflect any new priorities.

Practice Gratitude and Positive Reinforcement

- **Gratitude Check:** Regularly remind yourself why you're budgeting and how it aligns with your core values and dreams. This keeps you focused on the bigger picture and makes the budgeting process more meaningful.
- **Reward Yourself Responsibly:** If you successfully stick to your budget for a month, consider a small, value-based reward to celebrate. This helps reinforce the positive habit of budgeting.

By incorporating your Dream Map, financial audit, and core values into your budgeting process, you create a value-driven budget that not only manages your finances but also supports your life aspirations. With clear priorities and consistent tracking, you'll be on the path to financial freedom and achieving your dreams.

Money Mindset Tool: Set an Abundance Intention

Before diving into your budget, take a moment to center yourself. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and set an intention of abundance. Visualize money as an energy that flows to you and through you, supporting your dreams. Repeat to yourself: "I am the creator of my financial path. My budget is a tool of empowerment that allows me to nurture what I love. I welcome abundance and align my spending with my highest values." Feel gratitude for the control you're about to gain, and open your eyes ready to begin with purpose.



It's Your Time...

Your Path to Financial Freedom Starts Now!

Breaking free from the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle is more than just managing money—it's about reclaiming control of your life and creating the future you dream of. By following the seven steps detailed in this workbook, you've equipped yourself with powerful tools and mindset shifts that will not only stabilize your finances but also align them with your deepest values and goals.

You've learned how to create a realistic budget, build an emergency fund, cut unnecessary expenses, increase your income, pay off debt, set meaningful financial goals, and use your money to invest in your future. Most importantly, you've shifted your perspective from restriction to intention, realizing that every dollar has a purpose.

Your Next Steps: Continue Your Journey with Support



Making these changes can feel empowering but challenging, and you don't have to do it alone. If you're ready to take your financial transformation to the next level, I offer two ways to work together:

One-on-One Coaching

If you're looking for personalized guidance, you can work with me one-on-one. Together, we'll dive deep into your unique financial situation, develop tailored strategies, and create an action plan that aligns with your dreams. I'll be there to support you every step of the way, helping you stay accountable and motivated.

Smart Savings Society

Want to learn all the money skills you need to keep more of your hard-earned money? Join the Smart Savings Society—a supportive community where I teach you practical, easy-to-implement strategies to grow your savings, pay off debt, and fund your financial dreams. As a member, you'll get access to exclusive resources, group discussions, and expert advice to keep you on track.

It's Your Time...

...to Take Control

Remember, your financial freedom isn't a far-off dream—it's within your reach. The steps you've learned in this eBook are the foundation of a secure, fulfilling financial future. Now, it's time to take action, build on your progress, and reach your financial goals with confidence.

Ready to get started? Let's work together to make your financial dreams a reality.

Feel like you need a hand to guide you to money freedom? [Click here](#) for ways to work with me!

Want to talk to me to see if we'd be a good fit to work together one-on-one? Email me at lisawalbridgemoney@gmail.com to set up a free 30 minute discovery call.

You've got this! Your journey to financial independence starts now.

About Me

I have worn many hats in this wonderful life, including architect, teacher, and jewelry designer. But my true passion is personal finance. I've been reading books about finance and investing and money mindset for over three decades. In that time, I have learned how to create financial stability and build wealth.

The catalyst for my desire to teach others how to change their financial futures started ten years ago. I had wanted to stay home with our daughter from the moment I held her in my arms. But my husband and I didn't think it was feasible. We both worked full-time and if I left my job, we would be reducing our income by almost half. We were good about saving money, but we didn't have a budget and we didn't know where all the money was going.

Flash forward to when our daughter was three years old and my desire to stay home with her had surpassed the doubt I had about it being feasible. I was determined to make it happen. With a lot of research, mindset work, and budgeting, I created a financial plan that worked. I left my full-time job in 2017 and created so many magical memories with our daughter during that time home with her. It saw us through the pandemic and we were also able to purchase our forever home.

I want to share all the money skills I have learned, as well as my successful processes, so that you can fund your dream life, too!