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Late winter, early spring is that time of the year when tax season gets us thinking about our finances more than any other time. The questions and the stress that come about from tax season are not only the exciting question:

What will we get back in refunds?

How much will we owe once we complete our taxes?

What about my future?



Maybe this last question isn't on your radar just yet, but it probably should be. Why, you ask? For one, personal finances are a major contributor to stress which can be referred to as "Financial Stress." Financial stress typically occurs when an individual is unable to meet financial demands and afford life's necessities. This can bring on feelings of depression, anxiety, fear and anger.

It has been found that financial stress varies dramatically on demographic, according to a survey completed by Financial Finesse, Inc. Those who are categorized as having high financial stress are:

- Women under the age of 30
- Individuals with minor dependents
- Income level below \$60,000

Of course there is the other side of the spectrum of those groups who have lower financial stress and this particular group resembles:

- Men age 55+
- Individuals without minor dependents
- Income levels above \$100,000

Are you curious about where you stand financially and where you stand with your own financial stress?

Your retirement plan should have a financial calculator available for your usage, but if you do not have a 401k or Roth IRA there are such calculators available. You can reach out to your financial or tax advisor or check out some of the tools and resources on www.socialsecurity.gov.

Get a better understanding of your finances before your finances take a hold of you.

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Whatever your financial stress score may be, there are always things we can do to help ourselves improve our financial status for the future.

1. Identify your expenses
2. Create a budget
3. STICK to your budget
4. Balance your check book regularly
5. Pay bills on time
6. Build a 3+ month security in your savings account
7. Set-up a retirement fund
8. Speak with a financial advisor

Don't let yourself be one of the statistics when it comes to your finances, plan ahead. Create a goal that is reasonable for you to follow and execute on that goal. According to Financial Finesse, Inc 2013 stress study, only 14% reported having no financial stress, leaving 86% of the respondents dealing with some level of stress in their lives.

One final aspect of planning for the future is to consider the distribution of your estate with a Living Trust. Your Living Trust legally declares one or more individuals that will manage your affairs including your estate, property, and finances once you have passed away. By creating your Trust and keeping it updated, you can help eliminate confusion and hardship for your next of kin.

Looking to make an impact today in your financial future, lower your stress and improve your chances for financial freedom? Technology today has helped create some avenues to help us along the way. The following financial planning apps were highlighted by CNBC as some of the best apps in 2015.



Mint Bills (free) Sends bill-pay reminders either through email or push notification and lets you know when bank balances are running low to avoid overdraft fees.



Acorns (free) – By linking your credit and debit cards to this app it rounds up each charge to the next dollar, combining the difference and investing it into a professionally managed portfolio of your choice.



Level Money (free) – Evaluates your income, deducts recurring bills and the amount you wish to save each month then divides your funds into daily weekly and monthly allowances to help keep on track.

There are a lot of great products out there to be tools and a resources to you in creating financial stability and avoiding financial stress. Find out what works best for you, talk to a professional in the area of finance, create a plan and get to saving for your future!