

Mental Health & Money Toolkit

Free help guide to improve
your mental health and
money situation





Contents

How to use this toolkit	4
My situation	5
● Section 1	
Mental health and money: Where to start	7
● Section 2	
Getting ready to take action	11
● Section 3	
Understanding your finances	24
● Section 4	
Navigating the benefit system	37
● Section 5	
Support	43
● Section 6	
Signposting and appointment planner	47
Notes	51

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is a resource to help you understand, manage and improve your mental and financial health.

You can use it to help guide conversations with your relevant healthcare worker about your mental health and money. You can also take it with you to any money or debt advice appointments you might attend.

This toolkit is split into different sections, allowing you to choose which ones are relevant to you. We recommend everyone completes Section 1 first. You don't have to go through the toolkit in one go; you can come back to it at any time.

Mental Health & Money Advice is part of the charity Mental Health UK. This resource was co-produced with:

- People with lived experience of mental health and money difficulties.
- Healthcare professionals who support people to manage their mental health and money.

Mental Health UK would like to thank all of the people who kindly contributed to the creation of this resource. We are also grateful for the support of the National Academy for Social Prescribing and the Money Advice Service.





My situation

Once filled in, this can act as your mental health and money passport to help you communicate between services at any future mental health or money related appointments.

Name

Address

GP name and address

Name of other relevant
key workers

What aspects of your mental health do you find difficult?

What aspects of your financial wellbeing do you find challenging?

If you are struggling to pay your bills, you can ask your GP, or other healthcare professionals, to complete a Debt and Mental Health Evidence form which you can find on the Money Advice Trust website. This can help explain how your mental health affects your ability to manage money.



Section 1

Mental health & money: where to start

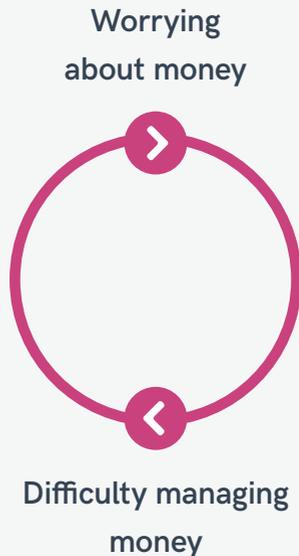
Where to start	8
Role of avoidance	10

Where to start

Worrying about money can be extremely stressful. You may feel like it is the only thing that you can think about and that your mind is not able to focus on anything else.

This can feel very debilitating and create the feeling of being stuck in a 'vicious cycle' because it doesn't feel like you can change the situation. It can start to impact on your wellbeing by affecting your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Whether you are navigating employment, unemployment or getting back to work after a period of ill health or redundancy, it can be a time of uncertainty, stress and anxiety. This can create a 'vicious cycle' where worrying about money leads to difficulty managing money and vice versa.





It can be common to have lots of thoughts about the 'worst-case scenario' or continually thinking about how things could have been different.

You may notice yourself starting to feel very low, and experience feelings such as **shame**, **embarrassment**, or **guilt**. You could find yourself beginning to withdraw from your usual activities and not wanting to spend time with people as much as you usually would.

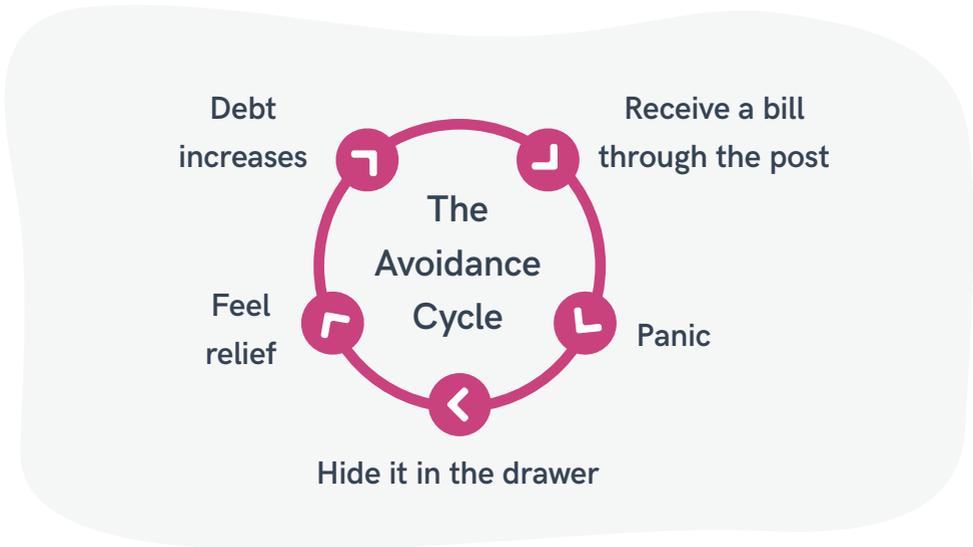
For more information about different thinking styles and how to re-balance thoughts, please visit Mental Health and Money Advice at www.mhma.org.uk/toolkit

Role of avoidance

If you are experiencing money worries, you may find yourself avoiding certain places, people or activities.

Avoidance is easy to do if you are feeling down or stressed because it will often make you feel relieved in the short-term. You just want to feel better as quickly as possible, so it makes sense that your brain automatically jumps to this option – even if it is a temporary fix.

The problem is, the thing that you are avoiding doesn't go away, and the more you avoid it, the more anxiety-provoking it can feel. Tackling what we are avoiding head-on is the only way to deal with it – even if it feels scary and you don't know where to start.



The following section tells you how to take action to break the avoidance cycle.

Section 2

Getting ready to take action

Building your confidence	14
Self-care	16
Problem-solving	18

Remember: You are not alone

We know that sometimes, having mental health and money difficulties can create feelings of guilt, shame and failure.

It is important to remember that **you are not alone** and that many people have been in a similar situation to yourself.

Carl's Story

Last year, I was made redundant from work and was left struggling to pay my bills. I didn't make a claim for benefits because I found the process confusing and mentally tiring. I am a single parent to my six-year-old son, and I really felt I had failed him.

Christmas soon came around, and I knew I needed to get financial support, as it was seriously affecting my mental health.

I realised I could apply for Universal Credit in my local area but because I have agoraphobia signing on in person was too daunting. In the end, I felt it was easier to ignore the situation, which just made my anxiety and depression worse.

That's when I was referred to and got help from the Mental Health and Money Advice service. I spoke to an adviser who listened to me and helped me make a claim for Universal Credit.

Throughout the process, the adviser gave me practical advice on how to navigate the benefits system, and got the DWP to come and assess me at home.

The adviser also booked me an appointment with the doctor on my behalf; they came out and gave me a doctor's note, and a referral to see a psychological wellbeing practitioner.



The journey has been long, but I am now receiving Universal Credit and in a much better financial position. This has relieved my stress and allowed me to improve my mental health dramatically.

- Carl

Building your confidence

We know that mental health and money worries can often knock your confidence and self-esteem. To help manage this, it's a good idea to recognise your unique qualities. This will remind you that your money problems are only one part of your identity.

Nobody is perfect, but we all have traits we can see as positive. Keep this in mind - as not everyone will have this strength. It can be empowering to write this down and keep it with you. You could keep it in your wallet or on your phone as a note and use it when you need a reminder of your ability.





Activity

Use the space below to write down the things you are good at or that you like about yourself. If you struggle with this, consider the strengths that other people notice in you, or an achievement that made you proud.

I am...

I can...

I am good at...

Other people think that I am...

My achievements are...

Self-care

Think about your current activity levels: Have these changed since experiencing financial difficulties? For good mental health, we need to be regularly taking part in routine, necessary, and enjoyable activities.

When we are under a lot of stress, we can often find that our activity levels decrease – particularly those activities which we used to find enjoyable. It is a catch-22 situation as you are unlikely to feel better in yourself if you don't have any opportunities to enjoy. Still, you are also unlikely to try activities if you don't feel like doing them.

It is important to try and regain a balance to these three activities; the routine, necessary and enjoyable ones. By doing this, it is likely to help your mood and wellbeing, putting you in a much better mindset to tackle some of the difficulties you are currently facing.

Activity

First of all, list the activities you currently do, used to do, or would like to do in each category.

Secondly, identify the order of difficulty of these activities - you may want to break activities down into more manageable steps. For example, 'read one chapter of my book' instead of 'read a book'.

Thirdly, schedule in some of these plans, ensuring you have a balance of the three different types of activity in your week.

Week 1

Routine	Necessary	Enjoyable
Examples: Laundry	Taking the children to school	Read a book
Water the plants	Change the energy supplier	Go for a walk
Do a food shop	Pay a bill	Meet with a friend

It is important to note that you may not be able to do some of the activities that you used to do, or what you like to do, because of the costs attached. Try to consider what it was about the activity that you enjoyed and consider other cheaper (or free) activities which would provide the same value.