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Army Community Service and the Financial Readiness Program (FRP) team would like to wish you a Happy New Year. As we begin 2025, it's a great opportunity to reflect on how we can foster greater understanding of our own finances, make informed decisions, and enhance money conversations.

The more we prioritize healthy financial habits, the more comfortable we become in managing our personal finances. When our financial habits align with our personal values and financial goals, we are empowered for success.

Earning more, spending less, reducing debt, and increasing savings are common resolutions. While we may know what we should do, doing it is another story. Start by making an honest assessment of your current situation, then set realistic financial goals and build them into your spend plan. Remember to set money aside for things that bring you happiness in balance with the necessities of adult life.

As we embark on a new year, consider shifting your focus from lofty resolutions to small, achievable changes. Start with one manageable goal, celebrate your progress, and witness how one small change can lead to another. Make 2025 a year of meaningful and sustainable growth.

FRP can help. Together, we can create a stronger foundation for financial wellness and success.

Here's to a year of growth, both financially and personally!

Happy New Year!

Dzien dobry, Dzien dobry, Dzien dobry!



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Successful Financial Resolutions in the New Year

More than half of people (59%) will make financial resolutions this year, but, without a specific plan, more than a third will give up on their goal within the first two months.

Making changes that last isn't easy, so it is important to prepare ahead to overcome the struggle. When the following principles are applied from the start, you stand a much better chance of success:

Be specific

- You have to make your goals and resolutions feel realistic enough that you are able to envision them coming true.
- When resolutions or goals are too vague we allow ourselves "wiggle room" and justify behaviors that are counterproductive to success.

Make one small change at a time

- Change is hard, so a complete lifestyle transformation is going to be incredibly difficult to stick with if it is not phased in over time.
- Set clear, achievable goals, one at a time based on your priorities.
- Don't try to do everything at once.
- Look closely at your behaviors to see what habits are leading you down the wrong path. For example, if you have relied on using debt to make impulse purchases, commit to cash-only transactions. Do not fall for buy now, pay later marketing that is designed to make new debt seem manageable..

Make it easy

- If you have to sacrifice things you love every day, you'll be making your life needlessly difficult.
- Consider manageable ways to hit your goals.
- Cut expenses that do not mean anything to you. Start with unused subscriptions, extra features on your phone plan, etc.
- Alternatively, you can identify situations when you tend to spend money you can't afford and reduce or eliminate exposure.
- Avoid scrolling through your phone at night. It can lead to temptation and spending money you haven't got.

Automate your good habits

- Set up direct debits so you don't need to do anything active in order to do the right thing.
- Make savings account transfers automatic to prevent the temptation to spend when you are trying to build your emergency fund or meet other financial goals.

Free up cash

- If you're committing to a new habit, you need to work out where this money is going to come from, or you'll run into a financial dead end.
- Start with drawing up a budget and look at where you're spending, then identify specific cuts that will free up the cash you need.

Even if you do all of these things, there will be bumps in the road. If you find yourself falling short, the key is not to give up. Pick yourself up and re-commit to your resolution again. You may find it helpful to have an accountability partner to help keep you on track. An accountability partner is someone who supports another person to keep a commitment or maintain progress on a desired goal. They will often be a trusted friend or acquaintance who regularly asks about your progress and helps you remain focused on the goal because they understand how important it is to you.

Personal financial improvement and success can be yours in 2025. Happy New Year!!



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5 WAYS to Make FINANCIAL GOALS in 2025



CHECK YOUR FINANCIAL STANDING
Your credit score, debt-to-income ratio and net worth will play a big role in future financial decisions.

EVALUATE SHORT VS LONG-TERM FINANCIAL NEEDS
Determine your financial goals and prioritize how to tackle them.

SET DEADLINES
Create a game plan and track progress – ensure your timeframe is realistic!

DO THE MATH
Determine the monthly amount you need to earn and save. Free online calculators are helpful.

CREATE A BUDGET
A budget will uncover discretionary income to make and meet monthly goals.

3 MONEY RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

1. Build an Emergency Fund
2. Reduce High-Interest Debt
3. Invest in Financial Literacy & Personal Growth

Identity Theft Awareness Week 2025

As a financial counselor, I was mortified when I found myself a victim of identity theft in June 2024. Planning to purchase a used car from a friend resulted in unauthorized bank account withdrawals and credit card charges totaling more than \$81,000. Eight months later, I am still working to clear up these challenges. It has become a personal mission of mine to ensure that everyone I talk to knows steps to protect themselves from identity theft and to safeguard their Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

National Identity Theft Awareness week starts on 27 January. During the week, the FTC and its partners will host free webinars and other events to talk about how to spot, avoid, report, and recover from identity theft.

Identity theft can happen to anyone and can take many forms. Someone could open a credit card or utility account in your name, or use your information to get a loan, a job, or medical care. They might even file taxes in your name to get your refund.

Identity Theft Awareness Week is an excellent opportunity to learn and talk about identity theft to help protect yourself, your Family, and your friends. Visit ftc.gov/IDTheftWeek to find out more information and take meaningful steps to protect your identity and your financial future.



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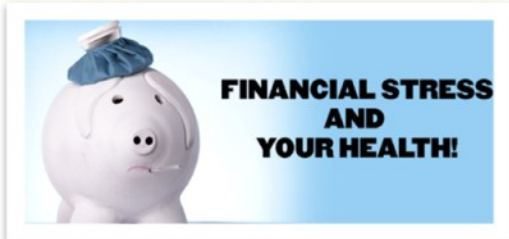


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Improving Your Personal Finances for a Healthier Mind and Body

New Year resolutions like losing weight, increased exercise, and eating better are the norm. However, it is important to consider that reducing financial stress is a great way to improve your overall health and physical condition in 2025.



Financial wellness is a state where you're able to meet current and future money-related needs. Financial wellness requires the knowledge to manage money, invest for goals, and create balance between meeting needs and personal enjoyment. Financial wellness is impacted by current financial needs, spending and savings behaviors, money confidence, and money goals.

Although many people feel confident about their personal finances, there are many people struggling with tough financial situations. Expenses add up and, over time, can lead to poor financial wellness. Debt and financial trouble can lead to poor effects on your health. The more debt you have, the more it can affect your well-being. The link between mental health and financial wellness is significant. Experts have found that stress from money problems tends to be long-lasting. They also found that financial issues are the top source of stress and tension for most people causing anxiety and depression.

The link between mental health and financial wellness tends to be cyclical. Many people with mental health disorders say that financial troubles make their mental health worse and worsened mental health considerations increase financial stress. Stigmas around debt or poor financial wellness can prevent people from asking for help. If financial stress gets to a point where it is difficult to meet essential needs, like food or heating, mental health impacts can be severe. Experts found that people in severe financial troubles are three times more likely to think about suicide.

If you have high levels of financial stress, you're more likely to notice it affects your physical health leading to issues like headaches or migraines, weakened immune system, high blood pressure, digestive concerns, muscle tension, heart issues, weight gain, and sleep problems. If your financial wellness is low and you have high financial stress, you're twice as likely to have poor overall health. Experts also found that you're four times as likely to get some sort of condition. Financial stress can also lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms like overeating and overuse of substances.

Your mental and physical health can improve from stronger financial wellness. It's important that you take the steps to improve your financial situation. Review your spending and saving habits and decide what expenses you can continue and what you can cut out. Identification of your current personal finance situation and the creation of a spend plan and debt reduction program are important steps to reduce anxiety around personal finances.



The Financial Readiness Program can provide financial counseling and training for units or individuals on a wide-array of financial subjects. Highly trained financial counselors can help you determine where you are financially, develop a personalized improvement plan and work with you to stay accountable to your financial goals.



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Thrift Savings Plan planning to unveil Roth transfer option in 2026

The federal government's Thrift Savings Plan for Service members and civilian employees will allow participants to transfer money from their traditional accounts into the plan's Roth accounts starting in 2026, according to the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB)

Stars & Stripes
Source Article



The Roth transfer option was announced at the November 21st FRTIB meeting. The benefit is expected to be available to all participants, except non-spousal beneficiaries or alternate payees.

The I Fund Has Made Changes: What You Need to Know

The five core funds within the Thrift Savings Plan allow for diversification of investments. Fund selection is a personal choice based on risk tolerance, remaining time before planned withdrawal in retirement, and many other factors. The I Fund has always been considered one of the funds that carries more risk due to its portfolio of international stocks. Late last fall, the I fund was changed to a new benchmark index, known as the MSCI All Country World Investable Market Index (MSCI ACWI IMI).

The new I Fund benchmark index further diversifies I Fund investments and gives TSP participants access to more markets and companies. The index includes more than 5,000 large, medium, and small companies from more than 40 developed and emerging market countries.

Investment in the I Fund offers the opportunity to experience gains from equity ownership of non-U.S. companies. The fund includes holdings like Samsung, Nestle, Shell and Novartis.

For more information on the I Fund and the other funds within the TSP, visit <https://www.tsp.gov/funds-individual/i-fund/>.

MSCI EAFE Index (old)	MSCI ACWI IMI Index (new)
About 800 large and mid-capitalization companies	5000+ large, medium and small-capitalization companies
21 developed countries	21 developed countries
No emerging markets	23 emerging market countries
Represents 55% of non-US market capitalization	Represents 90% of non-US market capitalization





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Financial Readiness for Army Leaders: Effective Counseling and Soldier Care 2nd Wednesday of the Month, 1300

Class will be held in person at Camp K Auditorium, Building 28

Also available through Teams

Register in advance to receive access codes and handouts

Engaged leadership makes all the difference.

Training Covers

- Personal Financial Readiness Leader Requirements
- Effective Communication with Soldiers about their Personal Finances
- Financial Literacy Touchpoints (NDAA 2016)
- Pay & Entitlements
- Financial Goal Getting
- Army Suicide Prevention Model
- FRP Overview
- TSP
- Army Emergency Relief
- Resources

Why Enroll

- Personal finance Issues can reduce mission effectiveness
- Financial challenges can result in loss of security clearances
- Dealing with personal finance issues before they increase in severity saves leaders time and resources
- Personal Financial challenges often lead to other high-risk behaviors
- Financial wellness is a retention tool
- Improves resilience, optimism, and focus amongst those you lead
- Shows you care about those you lead



Enrollment deadline: NLT 1200 on day prior to training



To register or for more information, please contact

ACS Financial Readiness

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This class will prepare CPL and above to meet ATP 6-22-1 standards:

All Army leaders will understand their Soldier's current financial situation and provide financial readiness information and resources.

Leaders will also possess the knowledge to review the current financial fitness of their Soldiers to determine if they have the support they need; how they plan to address debts and protect their security clearance.

