

# MAKE IT COUNT!

## 5 FINANCIAL RESOLUTIONS TO MAKE 2021 YOUR BEST YEAR YET

The fresh new year is a great time to reassess your goals, your strengths (and weaknesses), and to focus on you and your family's wellness—physical, mental, and financial. Whether you're just starting to think about your finances, or you've taken great strides in preparing, financial planning is an ongoing undertaking that must be nurtured at every stage. Whatever stage in which you find yourself, improving your financial situation and habits will prove a worthy and gratifying feat.

Whether you're trying to break old habits or improve your financial health (and wealth), these five simple ideas can help you get the ball rolling toward a brighter 2021.



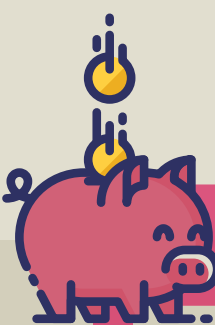
### 1. BE MORE CHARITABLE

- **Determine how (and if) you want to leave a charitable legacy and include it in your estate plan**
- Charities and special causes can be outlined as beneficiaries in estate plans, retirement accounts, life insurance, and beyond
- **Some life insurance policies allow you to add a rider (at no added cost) that will match 1% of your proceeds to donate to charity**
- Vote with your dollars
- Support companies you believe in when you shop and invest
- Sustainability, diversity, fair trade, and animal protection are just a few examples of causes that you can support with every dollar you spend.



### 2. GET ORGANIZED

- **Develop or update your estate plan**
  - 55% of Americans die without a will or trust
  - Over 70% do not have a current estate plan
  - Make sure your accounts, properties, contact information, and beneficiaries are titled properly and up to date (don't forget your Power of Attorney and Healthcare proxies!)
  - Make sure have clearly outlined all your financial information and that your attorney and estate executor (or trustee) know where to access your documents
- **Make sure your estate plan accounts for lost income and tax liabilities**
  - A licensed professional can ensure that your family is financially secure in the event of your death
- **Track your spending and develop a legitimate budget**



### 3. SAVE MORE AND TRIM THE FAT

- **Know what you're spending (look at the scary numbers) and ask yourself where you are overspending (Coffee? Takeout? Shoes?)**
- Cut frivolous spending and outdated subscriptions
  - Did you know: 63% of American gym memberships go completely unused
    - Take inventory of memberships and subscriptions and cut the ones that don't pay off!
  - Did you know: there are around 3 billion dollars of unused gift card balances in a given year?
    - Fish them out, use them, give them away, sell them at a discount – just don't waste them!
- Try dedicating these "extra" funds to an automated savings account
- **Know your credit score, calculate your debt ratio, and make sure you're ahead of any upcoming balloon rates**
- Take inventory on unnecessary fees such as late fees, electronic fees, or bank fees that can be avoided with simple adjustments such as meeting a minimum balance or setting up direct deposit
- **Include your kids in this process to teach them how to save more and leverage these skills**



### 4. PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

- **Protect your assets from market risk by diversifying your portfolio with guaranteed products that can provide a reasonable rate of return**
- Ensure that your portfolio is not too concentrated in any financial sector
- Make sure your financial plan accounts for things like inflation, rising education costs, and rising healthcare costs
- **Have a plan in place for the unforeseen, such as healthcare or long-term care needs that may arise, and make sure you have the coverage you need to handle them**
- Have up-to-date measures in place for protection against identity theft such as LifeLock and strong passwords
- Limit your personal liability in any applicable ways such as using business entities, umbrella coverage, and legally protected financial instruments



### 5. GET EDUCATED

- **Make sure you understand the scope of any government or employment benefits that are available to you such as a Health Savings Account (HSA), disability insurance, Life Insurance, and 401(K) matches**
- Consult a legal professional about the difference between a will versus a trust and determine what type of estate plan best suits your needs
- **Learn what type of liabilities you may be exposed to and consult a legal or financial professional to determine how to protect yourself from financial liability appropriately based on your profession, business ownership, and various involvements that may carry risk**
- Consult with a financial professional to learn what tools are available to you to minimize your taxes and optimize your wealth and spending