

How to think differently about money

Times of change and uncertainty can provide a prompt for taking stock and challenging any unhelpful or unhealthy behaviours we've fallen into. Here, personal finance author and journalist Alex Holder shares her five tips to resetting your attitude towards money.

Even before coronavirus landed in our lives, women were on the back foot when it came to money. Not just because we earn less, which we do – there's still a [13.1%](#) mean gender gap for full time workers in the UK – but because women have been socialised to think and behave differently with money.

From the media we consume to the financial advice we're offered, women are often presumed to have little financial education, although this is gradually changing. While women clearly exercise significant financial power globally, controlling 32% of the world's wealth (a figure that is expected to continue growing), they are still likely to [earn less](#) than their male counterparts.

The knock-on effect of the pay gap sees women saving less and, coupled with their tendency to invest less, meaning that, by the time retirement comes around, an average woman's pension pot is worth less than a [third](#) of a man's. And globally, just [19%](#) of women share responsibility with their partner for their long-term finances.

You don't have to have been furloughed, or your industry to have been flattened, to be stressed about money right now. Even those with rainy day savings are realising that this isn't a rainy day, it's a global pandemic, and those with investments are having to keep calm as markets take unprecedented dips.

So how, especially during such difficult times, can we think differently about money and empower ourselves to feel better about the future, at the same time looking after our mental health? Too often women are told that money, especially investing and growing it, isn't a topic for them – but if you're lying awake at night worrying about your finances, or doing the same calculations over and over again, then money is most definitely a topic for you.

1. Get hands-on with your money

Firstly, (and this is so simple that everyone can do it) we all need to engage with our own money. As much as you might want to avoid your bank balance right now, you can only make good decisions if you know your incomings and outgoings. It's amazing how often people are 'surprised' by a bill that leaves their account every month. But keeping on top of your finances doesn't mean checking tumbling markets or your portfolio balance every day - obsessing over an economic downturn you can't control will only create further anxiety.

2. Financial health is part of mental health

If we imagine mental health issues on a spectrum of severity, then money causes problems at every single juncture. From lowering our mood, causing mild depression and low-level anxiety to more extreme behaviours, like bipolar spending sprees and critical panic attacks.

Many conditions, even those not diagnosed, like mild anxiety, can exacerbate money problems so it's important to track your mental health along with your money situation. From daily worries about future security, to the feeling of relief that passes through us when an unpaid invoice hits your account, there is no denying that money affects how you feel. Understanding how your finances impact you, from sleep deprivation to eating habits, means you're more likely to be able to get ahead of issues before they arise. It might also be the motivation you need to prioritise saving for the future over the short-lived endorphins of a spending hit.

3. Scroll consciously

Social media means that we can now stream the lives of anyone we choose, direct to our own homes. So, make a conscious decision to follow people who inspire you to be your best, or enrich your life with content you enjoy. Right now, with our heads in our phones that much more, it's too

easy to pit ourselves and our perceived business failures against the veneer of a perfect life on social media. If you're feeling despondent about your work, your finances or your banana bread, try and focus on what you can change or control right now, rather than the highlights reel you're seeing of someone else's life on social media.

What do you think?

Did you find this article interesting? Are there any other topics you would like us to cover as part of the UBS Women Forum series? We'd love to [hear from you!](#)

4. Arm yourself with knowledge

Don't suffer alone. Money issues can feel incredibly isolating but there is so much advice out there. Lean into money conversations, share the knowledge you have with a friend, spend 15 minutes reading up on investments and challenge gendered assumptions about money.

5. Make your money work for you

When this pandemic is over, make a promise to take financial decisions that will benefit your future self. Investing doesn't just pay off in 20 years, it will give you a daily sense of well-being, and that, right now, is almost priceless.

To hear more from Alex, you can find her on Instagram [@alexandreholder](#) and Twitter [@AlexandreHolder](#).

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