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Ask the Biz Brain

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How do you stay on a budget? I have tried several times, and it never works. We are in our 40s, and I feel we are not where we should be at this stage in our lives. How can I get a budget started and stick to it, so we can finally see some savings?

-- Need disciplineWouldn't you like to stop thinking about money? Or at least when you do think about it, to feel calm and in control, confident you have enough, that you're making progress toward your goals and you can handle any setbacks likely to come your way?

Managing your money well gives you the power to achieve what you really want in life, while dialing back the anxiety that plagues people who live paycheck to paycheck.

Budgets tend to fail when people view them as an awful exercise in deprivation, instead of as a tool to help them stop wasting money on things they don't really want, so they can get the things they do. Once you view your spending plan in this light, it's easier to skip those sales and invitations.

You might want some inspirational reading. "Your Money or Your Life" by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin would be an excellent beginning. You might find David Bach's "Start Late, Finish Rich" helpful as well. (Savings tip: Check these out at your local library or buy them used online.)

You also may find it helpful to seek out a support group of people who are trying to get their finances under control. You might join an online forum, or the Simple Living Network at www.simpleliving.net can direct you to study groups in various cities that use "Your Money or Your Life" as their basic text.

-- Liz Pulliam Weston

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