

BREAKING THE OVERSPENDING CYCLE

8 Habits to Take Back Control of Your Money

Matney Financial Solutions Co. | Financial Coaching for Real Life

Most people don't overspend because they lack discipline — they overspend because they never built the habits to stop it. Willpower fades. A solid routine doesn't. The eight habits below are practical, proven, and designed to be built one at a time. You don't need to implement all of them at once. Start with one. Master it. Then add the next.

Habit #01 — The 24-Hour Rule

Before making any non-essential purchase over \$50, pause and wait a full 24 hours. Impulse buying is one of the biggest drivers of overspending — and it thrives on urgency. When you introduce a waiting period, you give your rational mind time to catch up with your emotions. Most of the time, after 24 hours, the urge to buy simply fades away. For larger purchases over \$200, consider extending the rule to 48–72 hours.

Pro Tip: Write the item down with the date. If you still want it after the wait — and it fits your budget — you can buy it guilt-free.

Habit #02 — Weekly Money Check-Ins

Set aside 10–15 minutes every week — Sunday evenings work well — to review your spending from the past seven days. Open your bank app or budget tracker and categorize where your money went. This habit builds financial awareness, and awareness is the foundation of every spending change. You can't fix what you don't see. Over time, these check-ins become faster and the patterns become clearer, making it easier to spot and stop problem areas before they spiral.

Pro Tip: Pair this with a small ritual — a cup of coffee or your favorite playlist — to make it something you look forward to.

Habit #03 — Automate Your Savings First

The most powerful savings habit is one that requires zero willpower: automation. On every payday, have a set amount automatically transferred to a savings or investment account before you ever see it. When savings come out first, you naturally adjust your spending to whatever remains. This is the 'Pay Yourself First' principle — and it works because the decision is already made. Even starting with \$25–\$50 per paycheck builds the habit and creates momentum.

Pro Tip: Keep your savings in a separate account — ideally a high-yield savings account — so it's not as tempting to pull from.

Habit #04 — Use One Dedicated Spending Account

Simplify your financial life by funneling all discretionary spending through a single checking account with one linked debit card. When everything is in one place, it's nearly impossible to lose track of your spending. No more mental math across three accounts and two credit cards. You see one balance, you spend within that balance, and you review one statement. This clarity alone can significantly reduce overspending.

Pro Tip: Set a low-balance alert on this account so you get a notification before you're in the red.

Habit #05 — Unsubscribe and Unfollow Spending Triggers

Your environment shapes your behavior. If your inbox is full of promotional emails and your social media feed is packed with influencers hawking products, you are constantly being nudged to spend. Take 20 minutes to unsubscribe from retail email lists, mute or unfollow accounts that trigger impulse buying, and delete shopping apps from your phone's home screen. Reducing exposure to spending triggers is one of the most underrated — and most effective — habits you can build.

Pro Tip: Use a separate email address for shopping and promotions so your primary inbox stays clean.

Habit #06 — Give Every Dollar a Job (Zero-Based Budgeting)

Zero-based budgeting means assigning every dollar of your income a specific purpose before the month begins — savings, bills, groceries, entertainment, and everything in between — until you reach zero. This doesn't mean spending everything; it means intentionally directing every dollar somewhere. When money has a plan, there's no ambiguity about what's available to spend. Overspending drops dramatically when your budget is specific rather than vague.

Pro Tip: Budget categories like 'fun money' are allowed and healthy — just make them intentional and capped.

Habit #07 — The No-Spend Day Challenge

Designate one to two days per week as no-spend days — days when you make zero purchases outside of pre-planned bills. This habit breaks the daily spending reflex that many people develop without realizing it: the morning coffee stop, the lunch out, the quick online order. No-spend days retrain your brain to pause before defaulting to a purchase. Over a month, even two no-spend days per week can save a meaningful amount and build strong spending discipline.

Pro Tip: Plan your no-spend days around days you're busiest — it's easier to avoid spending when you're in flow.

Habit #08 — Know Your 'Why' and Keep It Visible

Every financial goal needs an emotional anchor. Whether it's paying off debt, building a family emergency fund, buying a home, or simply reducing stress — identify your core 'why' and make it visible. Put it on your phone wallpaper, a sticky note on your debit card, or a reminder in your budget app. When you feel the pull to overspend, that visual cue brings you back to your bigger goal. Habits are easier to sustain when they're connected to something that genuinely matters to you.

Pro Tip: Write your 'why' as a specific, present-tense statement: 'I am building a \$10,000 emergency fund for my family's security.'

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