

Part 5: LIVING THE “NEW” REST OF YOUR LIFE
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While the concept of financial fitness translates into a disciplined way of life — living within our means, saving for the future and protecting against the unexpected — its ultimate benefit goes way beyond the tangible. Those who have achieved financial security, or those who know they are on their way, speak of an enhanced sense of freedom, one that allows them to focus on living a more meaningful life. The rewards of a concerted effort to manage your finances, while at times requiring some sacrifice, significantly outweigh the cost.

For Americans, financial anxiety is a leading cause of stress. Research conducted by Dr. E. Thomas Garman, Professor Emeritus at Virginia Tech University, revealed that over half of all American workers have money concerns. This statistic, coupled with the fact that women live longer and typically have less retirement savings than men, might provide you with the ultimate motivation to make a serious commitment to change.

What future do you envision for yourself? What will your retirement look like? What are your goals and how will you pay for them? The answers to these questions might appear blurry at first, but over time and as you get a handle over your finances, they become clearer. Through the proper management of your finances, you have a better chance of meeting your life goals.

Although it is never too late to start, it pays to begin early. Start by paying yourself first; make saving money a top priority. Become educated on financial matters. Plenty of material is available on the web and in your local library. When investing, diversify your money to minimize risks. Seek the advice of a professional to ensure that your investments follow proven principles and are not based on emotion. When setting long-term goals, your financial advisor can help you determine how much money will be required to achieve them. But ultimately, you are in charge of your future and the advice you receive must make sense to you.

Whether your goals involve traveling the world or saving the world, leaving a legacy or enjoying your last penny, staying fiscally fit will enable you to live a life that reflects your true purpose.

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