

Strategies for Staying Focused on Your Goals

Here are some strategies for staying focused on your goals by blocking unproductive messages and resisting impulse spending. You may have others.

Recognize the Tactics Used to Influence You to Spend Money

Advertisers and influencers are purposefully trying to get you to spend more money than you've planned. For example, they may give you a sense of false urgency or make it very easy to spend money. Recognize these tactics so you will know how you may be influenced.



Notice When and Where You're Tempted

Start paying attention to when and where you feel like making an impulse purchase. You might even try jotting down notes for a week – you could use paper or the notes app on a mobile device. Once you've spent some time noticing what triggers your impulses, see if you can identify any patterns.



Set Yourself Up for Success by Controlling Your Environment

It helps to avoid temptation altogether when possible.

- Do some people you follow on social media tempt you to spend money or derail your effort on your goals? If so, consider unfollowing or blocking them.
- Unsubscribe from mailing lists that create urgency by sending you lots of deals or coupons. You can shop for deals when you're actually ready to purchase something.
- Check customer reviews.
- Use a list when you go shopping and stick to the list. Find a mantra that may work to help you stay focused, such as:



**If it's not
on the list = It doesn't
exist**

Build in a Pause

You may be tempted to spend money on something you don't really need right now. Force yourself to pause so you can be sure it's not just an impulse.

- If you add an item to an online cart, shut down the browser before you purchase it. You can always come back later to buy it.
- If you're tempted to buy something you don't really need in a store, build in a pause. Don't put the item in your cart. Tell yourself you can come back at the end of your shopping trip to get it.
- Don't save your payment information at online retailers. Sometimes having to go find and input your payment information gives you enough time to resist the impulse.

**Talk Yourself Out of It**

When you're tempted to make a purchase that isn't in your spending and saving plan, try asking yourself:

- Is this a want or a need?
- Does it help me reach my goals?
- Is this in my spending and saving plan?
- If it isn't, can I plan for this expense by creating a savings goal?
- If I spend this money now, will it affect my ability to achieve my goals?
- Is there a way I'd rather spend this money?



Talk yourself out of it by reminding yourself of your goals.

Calculate How Many Hours or Days of Work an Item is Worth

Think about your hourly wage. If you are a full-time salaried employee, divide your annual salary by 2,080 hours.

Divide the cost of the item by your hourly wage. If you think an item costs "48 hours of work" or "six full days of work," it might help you decide to postpone buying it now and set a financial goal to save money to buy it later.

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
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 \text{cost of} & & \text{hourly} & & \text{have to} \\
 \text{item} & & \text{wage} & & \text{work to pay} \\
 & & & & \text{for item}
 \end{array}$$



Apply It: Staying Focused on My Goals

Think about the strategies we've discussed today. You can use them to block unproductive messages. Or, use them to let go of ideas that aren't helping you achieve your goals. Answer the questions below to figure out which ones might work for you.

When and where do I feel like making an impulse purchase?

What are some changes I can make to my environment to block unproductive messages or resist impulse spending?

Apply It: Staying Focused on My Goals *continued*

What are some changes I can make to “build in a pause” to give me time to think through a purchase?

What phrase can remind me how important it is to stay on track to achieve my goals?

**Remember the Key Takeaway**

External influences impact financial choices. Use strategies to stay focused on your goals.