

Achieving Financial Freedom

I love to read! I enjoy historical fiction, suspense, and drama novels. I struggle to focus on self-help books. I just want the bullet points. So, here are my bullet points on how to achieve financial freedom.

- Create a **budget** to include all of your income, expenses, and debt payments. Everyone needs a roadmap to get where they need to be. Review annually and adjust accordingly.
- **Pay yourself first.** You must have a fund to cover special expenses and emergencies. This will give you peace of mind when the inevitable situation arises. Life happens, if you are prepared you will be fine.
- **Live within your means.** Remember that **debt is the devil.** You will become a slave to paying your debts and the banks are the ones getting rich, not you. If you pay yourself first, you can use those monies instead of credit. No one likes receiving bills, everyone has a sense of pride when they see their increasing bank balance.
- Contribute to your **retirement fund.** Start small. Your future self will thank you for starting early.
- **Don't borrow from your retirement fund.** You will push back your retirement if you do.
- We can't have everything. Learn to **distinguish between needs and wants.** You may want the \$70,000 car, but you don't need the \$70,000 car. Perhaps buying the \$40,000 car will allow you to take the family vacation you want; and/or buy the designer shoes that you want; and/or contribute more to retirement.
- **Keep growing.** Seek ways to increase your income and/or decrease your expenses.
- **Don't be a victim to lifestyle creep.** Your budget should have you living within your means. Once you have a comfortable lifestyle and you are receiving bonuses and raises, there is a temptation to spend more. You have the opportunity to choose to spend more or save more or a combination of the two. Choose wisely.
 - Spending more keeps you committed to the **rat race.**
 - Saving more gets you closer to **financial freedom.**
 - A combination of spending and saving **rewards your hard work** while still getting you a bit closer to **financial freedom.**
- If you win the **lottery** or receive an **inheritance** or a tax refund or any other type of windfall, **don't be a victim to lifestyle creep.** Be wise to your current and future self.
- Be creative.
 - Experiences don't have to be expensive to be fun.
 - Doing things yourself can provide a sense of accomplishment and pride.