

Make a Plan to Save 30% or More on Your Heating Bills

October is Financial Planning Month – and there’s nothing better than making a plan to save money. If your utility bills in winter put a crunch on your budget, these tips to reduce energy usage can help.

#1: Turn down the thermostat

You can save as much as **10 percent** a year on heating and cooling by simply turning your thermostat back seven to 10 degrees for eight hours a day from its normal setting. Those eight hours could be while you are away at work or school, when sunlight is warming your house, or when you’re asleep under a pile of cozy blankets. For every two degrees, you can save an average of three percent on your energy bill.

#2: Seal up your house to keep cold air out, and warm air in

Caulking and weatherstripping help seal your house up, keeping the warm air in. These are affordable DIY ways to improve energy efficiency and can save you about **7.5 percent** on your energy bill! About \$240 can cover weather stripping all your windows and doors.

Additionally, minimize the air that escapes by closing the damper on your fireplace when it’s not in use, and use bath and kitchen fans sparingly. This can save **another 10 percent** on your energy bill.

#3: Change your furnace filters regularly

Your furnace or heating system is responsible for about half your energy bill. Changing the filters every three months means your furnace doesn’t have to work as hard, saving you energy and money in the long run. A clean filter costs about \$20 and can lower energy use by as much as 15 percent according to the U.S. Department of Energy. That means of another **7.5 percent** savings on your monthly bills.

#4 Get a pro to test your energy efficiency

Many utility companies offer free energy audits, which can help you figure out how much energy your home uses and take steps to increase efficiency. Start by contacting your utility company or find an auditor near you. According to **Energy.gov**, an energy audit can show you ways to save **five to 30 percent** on your utility bills.

#5: Get free heat from the sun

Warm sunshine can heat your home, for free! Open curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day to warm your interior rooms and surfaces. Then close your curtains at night to help keep the heat from escaping. This could help save another **one or two percent** on your energy bill in colder months.

If you are having trouble keeping up with higher winter utility bills, ask your utility company about a payment plan. Many companies offer a year-round plan that spreads costs out over all 12 months.



Financial Wellness at Work

Your financial health factors into your overall wellbeing — mentally, physically and emotionally. If you're stressed about your finances, chances are it's affecting you at home, and at work. Financial stress hogs more than its fair share of energy and compromises your attention span.

People all over the pay scale are feeling the stress. In a 2016 CareerBuilder survey, 68 percent of all workers said they were in debt, and workers in all income levels report living paycheck-to-paycheck — even nine percent of those making \$100,000 or more.

If you're feeling stressed about your finances, you're NOT alone.

According to the PwC 2017 employee wellness survey, one in three people have been distracted at work by personal finance issues within the past year. Nearly half of those distracted by finances spend three or more hours a week dealing with personal finance issues at work. Your financial wellness is a key component in your overall wellness.

Here are some ways you can cope

- **Take time for you and your money:** Like a "mental health day," take one of your vacation days, PTO days, or devote a day that you aren't scheduled to work to accomplishing some important financial tasks.

- **Identify your root cause:** High credit card debt? High interest rates got you spinning your wheels? Not enough income? Have the cash, but still have trouble managing where it's going? Trouble with your credit score?
- **Once you know your goals, plan out your finances:** Confirm your total income. Determine how much of it is already committed to bills and necessities, and how much of it is available for paying off debt, saving and spending.
- **Have questions? Help is here:** If you have high credit card debt or you are struggling to keep up with your bills, GreenPath offers free debt and credit counseling. We will help you understand your options and make decisions about your next steps. Give us a call: 877-337-3399. It's free!

When you are financially healthy, you are less stressed, more productive and more content. This makes life easier and more satisfying all around! It leads to a better work experience, better relationships, and can set you on your path to achieve your dreams.

Webinar Wednesdays for October

Vision Boards — Another Way to Help Your Dreams Come True — October 17th, Noon ET

Goals are powerful tools for personal finance. When you have a goal, you can make a plan. But what about the other aspects of our dreams? How will I feel when I achieve this goal? What will my life look like when my dream comes true? These are also powerful motivators, and they can help you stick to your plan. Envisioning your future can actually help turn your dreams into reality.

Join our webinar to find out how a vision board can help you realize your goals and learn how to make one. Visit greenpath.com/gfw-webinar-wednesdays to register.

