

Remaining financially confident during tumultuous times can be challenging—but a positive outlook can go a long way. Here are some tips to help you make healthy financial decisions even in a time of economic uncertainty.

1. It's good to be a federal employee.

In a time of record unemployment, the federal government is hiring—and the job comes with generous benefits like a pension and a matched 401(k)-style plan. Such a combo is hard to find in the private sector.

2. Remain unemotional when making financial decisions.

Most financial decisions are influenced by two powerful emotions: fear and greed. Instead of giving in to the stereotype, take a step back and unemotionally look at your situation before making a rash decision.

3. Focus on the long-term and avoid reacting.

Keeping your eye on the long-term effects of your past and present decisions will help you to remain focused on the issues you can control. Be proactive and avoid reacting to media-hyped information.

4. Know your own limitations.

It's easy to be an "aggressive" investor in a good market—but how about in a volatile one? Make sure your TSP contributions and allocations are consistent with your risk tolerance and retirement timeline.

5. Be realistic about your retirement plans.

Many federal workers have recently adjusted their retirement plans due to the economic situation. Others have scaled back their once grand vision of what retirement will look like.

6. Keep an open mind, but beware of the water cooler chatter.

While the proverbial water cooler may be a good place to catch up on the office gossip, it's certainly not the place you want to receive retirement advice. Beware of the self-appointed office expert.

7. Understand what you have.

Having a map doesn't do you any good if you don't know where you are. Take a hard look at the benefits you have as a federal employee and be sure you are maximizing every opportunity available to you. If you have investments or insurance on the outside, be sure that the programs complement one another.

8. Understand what you need.

Have you ever wondered if that FEGLI coverage is enough, or if it's the right kind of insurance for your family? How much should you contribute to the TSP, and how long will it last you in retirement? Recognizing what you need for a secure retirement is the first step in making sound financial decisions.

9. Plan, plan, plan—and ask for help when you need it.

Those who have a clear plan outlining retirement goals are more confident making the transition into the next phase of their life. Find someone you trust who can help you to make smart choices about money and retirement. Many financial professionals specialize in working with federal employees and leveraging your benefit options. Remember—most people don't plan to fail, they simply fail to plan.

10. Review your situation often.

Marriage, divorce, and the birth of children can significantly affect your situation. Take time to make sure that your beneficiary designations are in place for TSP, CSRS/FERS, and FEGLI. How many years has it been since you took a good hard look at your benefits? Be sure to include your spouse in each review.

Following the session, you may submit questions to the speaker, Chris Lennan, by visiting: www.MyFederalRetirement.com/questions

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