

Lesson 2: Financial Independence

Empowering Your future through smart money choices

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EmpowerHer

Financial Independence

What is it?

Having enough income, savings, and investments to cover living expenses without external support.

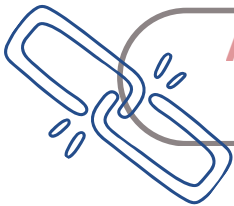
Key elements:



Autonomy in decision-making



Security against unexpected events



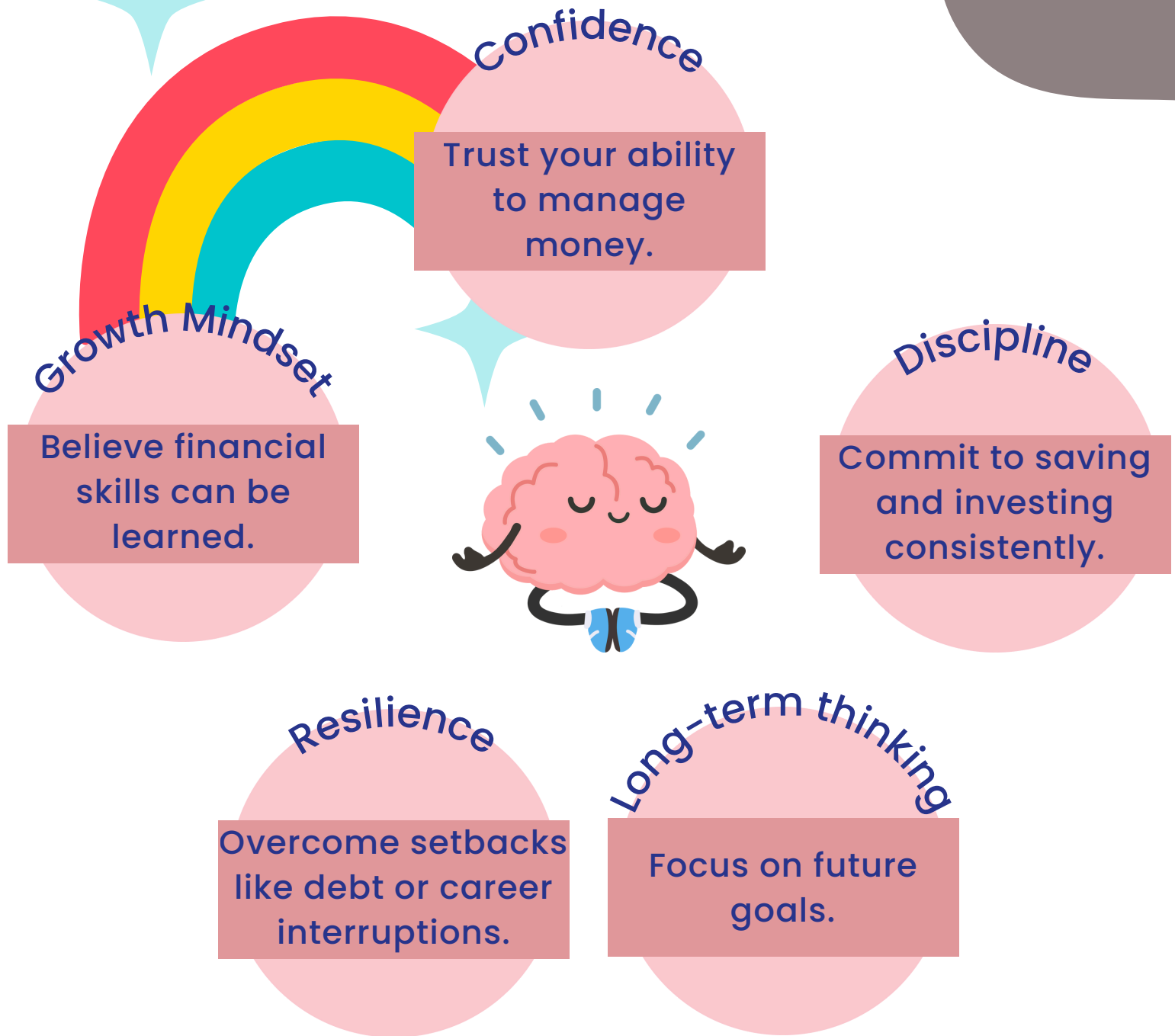
Ability to pursue passions without financial constraints



Levels of Independence

- **Basic:** Covering monthly expenses without debt.
- **Intermediate:** Building savings and investments.
- **Advanced:** Passive income covers lifestyle.

Mindset



Tip for Mindset: Mindset Shifts

From "I'm bad with money" → "I can learn financial skills."
From "Investing is risky" → "Smart investing builds security."

Steps towards independence

CONTENT TO KNOW

BUDGETING:

Track income/expenses; use 50/30/20 rule.

EMERGENCY FUND:

Save 3-6 months of living expenses

DEBT MANAGEMENT:

Prioritize high-interest debt

INVESTING:

Learn about stocks, bonds, and retirement accounts

RETIREMENT PLANNING:

Contribute to 401(k), IRA.

MULTIPLE INCOME STREAMS:

Side hustles, passive income

Checklist

- ☐ Track all expenses for one month.
- ☐ Identify 2 areas to cut back.
- ☐ Open a savings account for emergencies.
- ☐ Automate retirement contributions.

Barriers for Women

Wage gap

Women earn less on average

Action Plan:

Research salary benchmarks



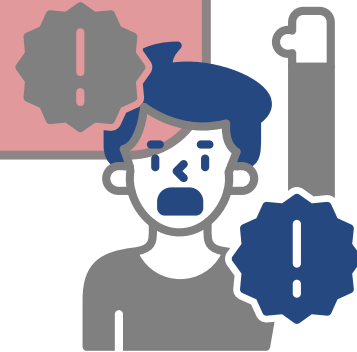
Career

Interruptions

Maternity leave, caregiving

Action Plan:

Build flexible income streams

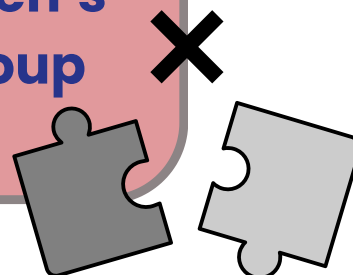


Confidence Gap

Women may invest less aggressively

Action Plan:

Join a women's finance group



Case Studies & Exercises

Case Study #1:

Single Mother Builds Independence Through Budgeting and Side Income

Background:

- Lina, 34, works full-time as a receptionist. She is a single mother of two children, ages 6 and 9.
- Her monthly income: \$3,200 after taxes.
- She had \$8,000 in credit card debt and no emergency savings.

Steps Taken:

1. Budgeting:

- She created a strict monthly budget using the 50/30/20 rule.
- Cut dining out from \$250/month to \$50/month.
- Reduced subscription services from \$80/month to \$20/month.
- Redirected savings toward debt repayment.

2. Side Income:

- Started a weekend side hustle selling handmade crafts on Etsy.
- Earned an additional \$400–\$600/month.

3. Debt Management:

- Focused on paying off her highest-interest credit card first (19% APR).
- Used the “snowball method” after clearing that card, rolling payments into the next debt.

4. Emergency Fund:

- Built a \$5,000 emergency fund over two years by saving \$200/month plus side hustle income.

Outcome:

- Within 3 years, Lina paid off all credit card debt.
- She now has \$7,500 in savings and contributes \$150/month to a Roth IRA.
- Her financial independence means she can cover her family’s needs without relying on loans or external support.

Case Studies & Exercises

Case Study #2:

Mid-Career Woman Overcomes Debt and Builds Wealth

Background:

- Aisha, 42, worked as a nurse earning \$65,000/year.
- She had \$20,000 in student loans and \$12,000 in credit card debt.

Steps Taken:

1. Debt Repayment Plan:

- Consolidated her credit card debt into a lower-interest personal loan.
- Paid \$600/month toward debt, clearing it in 3 years.

2. Financial Education:

- Took online courses in personal finance.
- Learned about investing and retirement planning.

3. Savings & Retirement:

- Built a \$10,000 emergency fund.
- Increased 401(k) contributions to 15% of her salary.

4. Side Hustle:

- Picked up occasional telehealth shifts, earning an extra \$500/month.

Outcome:

- By age 47, Aisha was debt-free and had \$150,000 in retirement savings.
- She feels secure knowing she can handle emergencies and is on track for retirement.
- Her journey highlights resilience and the importance of financial literacy.

Exercises

Budget Practice:

Create a mock monthly budget using your current income.
Identify at least 2 areas where you could cut expenses.

Goal Setting:

Write down 3 financial goals: short-term (1 year), medium-term (5 years), long-term (10+ years).

Mindset Shift:

Reflect on one limiting belief you have about money.

Replace it with a positive affirmation (e.g., "I am capable of building wealth").

Worksheet

My Financial Independence Goals

- Short-term goal (within 1 year):

(Examples: pay off one credit card, save \$1,000 in an emergency fund, start a budget.)

- Medium-term goal (within 5 years):

(Examples: save for a down payment, build \$20,000 in investments, pay off student loans.)

- Long-term goal (10+ years):

(Examples: retire early, reach \$500,000 in retirement savings, own a home outright.)

Steps I Will Take This Month

Write down 2–3 specific actions you will commit to in the next 30 days:

(Examples: track all expenses for one month, set up automatic savings transfer, increase retirement contribution by 2%.)

Affirmations

Repeat these daily to build confidence and reinforce your mindset:

- “I am capable of managing my money.”
- “Financial independence is within my reach.”
- (Optional: Write your own affirmation here: _____)

Reflection Prompt

Think ahead about challenges you might face. Write down one obstacle and how you’ll overcome it:

- Obstacle I expect: _____
- How I will overcome it: _____

(Example: Obstacle = “I struggle with impulse spending.” Solution = “I’ll leave my credit card at home and use cash for daily purchases.”)