

**Being financially educated means you know how you spend your money. In fact, you have a plan for what and where you spend. But being financially empowered means you have control over your money.**

**Here are some tips to help get you there.**

### **Set your goals.**

Everyone's goals are different. Think about yours. Do you want to get out of debt? Do you want to save for the future? Do you want to pay your bills every month? Write down your goals. Then, you can look at them to remind you where you're going.

### **Commit to change.**

Do you believe you can change your financial situation? You might have to make some choices to change the path you're on. But if you believe you can, and you commit to making those changes, then you can do it.

### **Decide on your financial boundaries.**

These are the limits we place on our financial interactions with others – especially family. Think about what people expect from you financially. Then decide what feels right for you and your family. You might need to talk with others about any changes you decide to make. Remember that you can give. But if you give everything, you won't be able to take care of yourself.

### **Look at your financial situation.**

Where are your finances today? Collect your pay stubs, statements of payment, and anything else that shows what you earned last month. Write down what you earned. Then collect your bills and receipts for the past month. Write what you spent, and for what. Think about that. Did you spend on things you needed, or things you wanted? Are there places to cut? What can you change?

### **Make a budget.**

What will you earn and spend this month? Write down your plan. First, write how much you expect to earn this month. That is how much you have to spend or save. Then think about what you spent last month. Use that to help you write what you plan to spend this month. Does it add up to less than you earn? Great! You can save some money. Does it add up to more than you earn? Look for places to cut spending.

### **Track your spending.**

During the month, write down everything you spend. It will help you find the surprise places you spend money. (That soda you buy for \$1.50 every day doesn't feel like much \$1.50 at a time. Multiply \$1.50 times 30 and you've spent \$45 a month on soda.) Tracking also will help you adjust: if one bill is higher than you expected, you know in time to cut another expense to stay on track.

### **Repeat.**

No one gets financially educated or empowered overnight. Everyone has to work at it. So keep writing down your spending. And keep making a budget every month – and reviewing it during the month to see if you're on track. Make these practices a habit and you'll start to see and feel the difference.