



Women and money

Standard Chartered Bank

Women nowadays have many hats to wear for their roles in life, juggling responsibilities as a mother, daughter and wife as well as with their career.

With women being so busy, there are often times that the tendency to neglect personal financial matters is high as they tend to put other people's needs like those of their family before theirs.

While the financial tips and reminders are targetted at women, they are actually in fact applicable to either gender taking care of course to understand their key points.

Women tend to live longer than men. Hence the main concern is building a retirement fund that will realistically see you through your golden years. The other concern is that women also tend to be compulsive shoppers and the virtue of discipline needs to be called for.

START PLANNING EARLY

Like the local Malay phrase - '*Sikit sikit, lama-lama jadi bukit*' - the saying generally means that little by little it will grow. The same goes to your retirement fund, and the earlier you start, the bigger the "mountain".

Do not make the mistake of assuming that your husband's life insurance will help to compensate in the event of death. Neither should you assume that your children will be financially stable enough to support you.

While of course it's a rosy and hopeful means to an end, it may just not happen. Even if you are very sure that you will be well taken care of, having the extra money or income could be a bonus for you or a means

of handling any emergencies that you or your children may face.

The only person who knows how to take care of you is yourself!

Increase your monthly contribution to the government retirement scheme. Check with the Employees Trust Fund (TAP) if you can increase your personal contribution from its current percentage.

TAP has attractive interest rates on its investments. It is also important to realise that your employer is also contributing an equivalent amount to your contribution of five per cent - nobody is going to give you an extra five per cent completely free for your retirement fund.

If you are given the option of signing up for TAP or not to, do not turn the contribution down. This is like turning down free money.

Educate yourself about investment strategies. You don't have to be a genius to figure out basic fixed deposits or buying foreign currency. Any good bank will have financial consultants available to provide you with advice on what you can start on first depending on your risk appetite and how many years you have left to retirement.

Take advantage of facilities that make it convenient for you to put aside money to start a unit trust investment such as standing instructions where a set amount is deducted from your account or salary on fixed dates hence putting off procrastination or forgetfulness on your part.

While you are working hard for your money, you should also make your money work hard for you.

THE ART OF CONTROL

Many times the temptation to adorn

and surround ourselves with pretty things gets the better of us and we give in. Of course nobody likes to be told what they can spend their hard earned money on either. This is where good judgement and performing a good balancing act should be fine tuned.

Treat yourself to realistic rewards. While we always think we deserve a new pair of shoes or a new handbag or jewellery, the question you should ask yourself is do you really need it? Can you keep hold off on these desirable items to a later date? And most importantly do you really have enough money to pay for such a treat?

If you have a steady savings plan in place and have a good sized emergency fund set aside already and you do you have the spare cash to splurge on such a treat then perhaps you do deserve it because you have exercised a good sense of discipline to ensure that your basic financial needs are met.

But if you don't have these in place and are thinking of putting the purchase on a loan then most likely it is not a reasonable reward to give yourself.

Think twice about the desirable item that you want to buy. When walking into a shop and finding something attractive, do not just pick it up straight away.

Instead, linger over the thought of purchasing it. Take a few days to think about it too. Sometimes having time to think about the purchase will make you realise that you may not actually like the item all that much and decide not to buy it.

This could then save you some cupboard space and more importantly, some money.