

6 Tips for a Powerful Financial & Fitness Year

Frank McLaughlin, CFP® at [Merriman](#)
Dan Kleckner, Co-Owner of [Cutting Edge Fitness](#)

FINANCIAL TIPS

#1: Build up three months' worth of emergency cash

When you have unexpected expenses, like those associated with a job loss or a major house repair, an emergency fund can help fill the gap so you don't have to turn to credit cards or withdraw from a retirement account. Holding three months' worth of expenses in an emergency fund at the bank is a good start. You should increase this fund over time as your income and living expenses grow.



#2: Max out health savings account (HSA)

If your employer offers an HSA, this is an amazing savings vehicle you can use to pay medical expenses now and in retirement. These contributions are not subject to federal and state income taxes, or payroll taxes, and withdrawals for medical expenses are tax-free. Considering this [Fidelity study](#), which found that a couple in retirement spends \$245,000 on healthcare, not including the cost of long-term care, saving in tax-advantaged accounts for these expenses is a must.

#3: Max out 401(k) plan

If you can contribute the maximum consistently without jeopardizing your finances or being at risk of having to take an early withdrawal, it pays off long-term. Not only will you receive the tax deduction up front on any contributions, the funds will grow tax-deferred throughout your career, providing a greater balance to draw from in retirement. If you can't max out your 401(k) yet, make sure you're contributing at least enough to receive the full employer match.

FITNESS TIPS

#4: Don't go too hard too fast

Some people get excited around the new year and try to hit all their goals right off the bat. They go to the gym four or five days a week or maybe start a new crash diet. Unfortunately, this becomes unsustainable after a month or so and they end up quitting altogether. It's more beneficial to start small and slowly build habits that are sustainable long term.



#5: Decide what is important to you

Let's be real. If our New Year's goal was really so important to us, we probably wouldn't wait until the new year to pursue it. As Frank and I discussed in our earlier videos, it's important to have a deep enough "why" to help you through the times when you want to quit and give up.

#6: Find someone to hold you accountable

Most people can have motivation on their own that lasts the first month or so of their New Year's resolution. But after time, pretty much all of us need some type of accountability to keep us going long term. Finding a fitness professional or even just a workout buddy to keep you accountable can go a long way in your long-term fitness and health goals.

We hope you find these tips valuable as you start working toward your goals in 2019 and beyond. We'll be following up with a short email series to give you even more tools and resources.
If you'd like to chat, please reach out.

