

Save smart without skipping life's simple joys today



Saving for the future is wise, but denying yourself joy in the present can drain your spirit. This article explores how a mindful budget can strike the right balance — protecting your finances while leaving space for the small pleasures and experiences that truly enrich life.

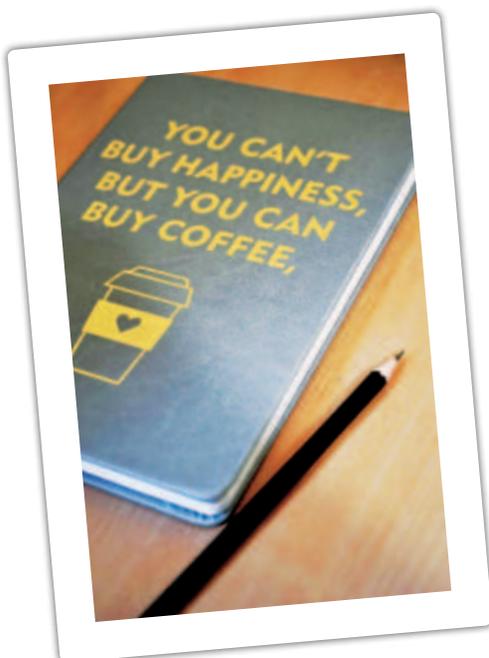
While it is commendable to save money for emergencies by cutting back unnecessary expenses, you need to prioritise your emotional well-being. You can work your entire life to earn money, but no magic wand will take you back to a younger self. We often realise we are being too hard on ourselves when it comes to saving; we stretch our willpower to the limit, constantly sacrificing small joys for the sake of saving for the future.

Following the spirit of “making the most of the present”, allow yourself certain financial pleasures, whether it’s once a day, a week, a month, or even a year, depending on your priorities and passions.

Why you need a detailed budget that includes happiness

The importance of budgeting lies at the core of human behaviour. Hyperbolic discounting, a cognitive bias of the human mind, inclines us to impulsively spend money in the present rather than save for the future.

Studies have shown that frivolous spending is often linked to the absence of a detailed budget. When you make a clear budget, you are less likely to waste money on impulse purchases. This way, you spend



money on the things you have identified as meaningful to you.

Doing so, instead of being swept away by temptations and finding yourself broke at month’s end, you will have money reserved for the things that genuinely bring you joy.

Making room for happiness

The meaning of happiness can be as simple as a weekend trip, a hangout with friends, or just enjoying a cup of coffee while watching the sunrise.

A portion of your budget could go

toward hobbies like buying your favourite books if you enjoy reading, or exploring new activities you have always wanted to try. You can also set aside money for a pet project you have always dreamed of but never had the time or resources for.

Another portion could be dedicated to your loved ones, whether it be a thoughtful gift and flowers for a special occasion, or even just on a random day. And of course, depending on your preferences, there are other small treats you should allow yourself, at a frequency that feels right for you.

How to save smartly

As Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the US, once said, “Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship”. To maintain a detailed budget, keep a record of your expenses to identify what’s eating into your income, and explore areas where you can cut back on or find more affordable alternatives.

While some argue that card payments help keep a better track of expenses through electronic statements, studies

show that the ease of swipe and pay can still encourage you to buy more items or services than you would with cash. That’s why you need to be wary of credit card debts.

Similarly, reassess the memberships or subscription plans you are signed up to and consider withdrawing from those you no longer use.

Whenever you get your pay cheque, keep a portion of your income in a separate envelope, jar, or digital wallet so you are not tempted to dip into it for essentials. Setting aside about 5–10 per cent of your income for guilt-free spending can be a good rule of thumb, though the ideal amount depends on your circumstances.

Budgeting for happiness may sound like a luxury, but think of it as an investment in yourself — rejuvenating your energy and motivation to keep going through the heavy lifting of life!

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Collected

