

**Y**OU can get out of debt quickly – simply by following the advice of five young women who formed a money club that worked wonders for them. Within just 10 months, they got out from under a collective debt of \$50,000.

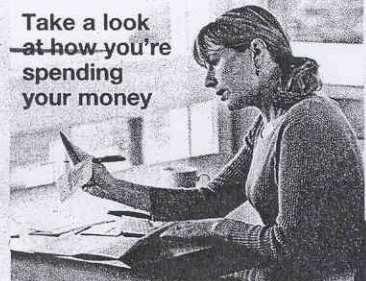
“We were financial disasters – and if we can get out of debt, anyone can,” club member Katie Dunsworth, 26, told *The ENQUIRER*.

The five ladies, from Vancouver, Canada, got the idea from an “Oprah” show on debt and named themselves the Smart Cookies.

They did so well, they landed their own Smart Cookie radio and TV shows, plus a newspaper advice column. They’ve also written a best seller called “The Smart Cookies’ Guide to Making More Dough.”

Here are some of their key tips:

**\$**Try to find pals or colleagues who are in the same financial boat. Meet once a week to discuss the steps you are taking to get out of debt. The group will keep you accountable for your spending and will allow you to share ideas.



Take a look at how you’re spending your money

**\$**Be open about how much you owe. Many people try to hide their debt, as if it is a shameful secret. But if you get it off your chest, you’ll feel better and be better able to focus on solutions.

**\$**Find out exactly what you’re spending on. Go over all your bills, credit card statements, bank statements and utility bills from the past three months. You need to know where your money is going before you can find savings.

**\$**Set a budget based on your necessary expenses. Katie had been spending \$700 a month on miscellaneous items. She lowered it



Get a reduced rate on your credit card

to \$250 a month – and saved \$5,400 in a year.

**\$**Use cash for purchases. That helps keep you realistic about what you can afford.

**\$**Call your credit card company and get it to reduce the interest rate. The Smart Cookies were able to slash their rates from 18 to 11 percent. If the credit card firm says no, say you’re going to transfer your debt elsewhere. The company

will usually come around quickly.

**\$**Sell unused clothes – and share other garments. Katie paid \$1,400 for her wedding dress. She sold it for \$900. “Instead of buying new clothes, we’d raid each other’s closets and we saved \$5,000 in a year,” said Katie.

**\$**Shop for cosmetics at drugstores rather than mall stores – and you’ll save a bundle.

**\$**Give up your phone land line and just use your cell. All five group

members did – and each saved \$50 a month or \$600 a year.

**\$**If you watch mostly network shows, cut out cable TV. One member saved \$70 a month.

**\$**Buy generic rather than brand-named items when grocery shopping. The store-brand products are usually high quality but cheaper.

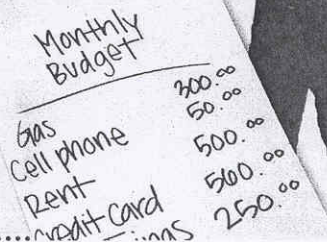
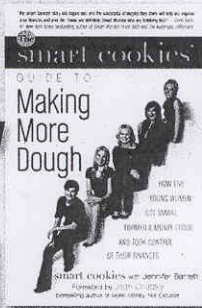
For more ideas from the Smart Cookies, visit their Web site at [www.smartcookies.com](http://www.smartcookies.com).

by PHILIP SMITH  
tips@nationalenquirer.com



# GET OUT OF DEBT – FAST

It worked for 5 Smart Cookies and IT CAN WORK FOR YOU, too



The Smart Cookies were inspired by an “Oprah” episode