

5 Ways to Keep a Handle on Holiday Spending and Still Enjoy the Season

Does the added pressure to buy things during the holidays leave you feeling financially overwhelmed? Here are some suggestions to help keep your spending under control so you can celebrate the things that truly matter and enjoy a financially healthy New Year:

1 CREATE A BUDGET

If you have credit card debt now, you certainly don't want to elevate those numbers. Assess your financial situation. Set a spending number that you will not exceed and consider putting aside cash in an account to cover it.

2 AVOID THE BINGE

Staying on a financial diet can be tough. Prepare your shopping list and commit to avoiding any unplanned purchase above your set threshold.

***Shopping momentum effect:** Everything from display placement to lighting and music is designed to trigger impulse purchases. You're more likely to keep spending once you've gotten started. You can counteract the 'shopping momentum effect' by sticking to your list and leaving the store when overly tempted.*

3 REVAMP YOUR GIFT POLICY FOR ALL THE ADULTS ON YOUR LIST

If you think it might be welcome, suggest a gift drawing, a moratorium on gifts or some other alternative where you trade off presents for quality time together.

***Get creative:** You can bake cookies and other treats, get crafty, help with household tasks, or find other ways to give homemade gifts creatively. You don't have to buy expensive gifts to show that you care.*

4 CHECK FOR COUPONS

If you know where you'll shop, subscribe to the stores' emails—you'll start getting coupons and news of specials. Also, if you do shop online, sites like BradsDeals.com and CouponCabin.com have promotional codes that you can type in for discounts.

***Don't forget taxes, shipping or fine print:** Online prices might look like a great deal until you realize you may be spending another 20 percent of the gift's price to get it to your house or the recipient. Look for free shipping codes. Do the math before you buy.*

5 BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO

There can be a lot of pressure to make this holiday season bigger and better than the last. It is a wonderful time to get together with friends and family and celebrate with good cheer. Set boundaries and communicate those boundaries to those around you. While this time can be full of joy, it can also bring up negative emotions. Reach out for help if stress or sad or anxious feelings are overwhelming you.

Your EAP, SAP or MAP can help you prepare for the financial aspect of the holiday season.

Log in to your WorkLife or Student Life Online Portal for access to online financial resources, budgeting tools and advice. Go to perspectivesltd.com and click "INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY LOGIN" at the top of the page.

We're here for you. Call or text 800.456.6327