Holidays are time for celebrating your favorite traditions, spending time with family, and inevitably, spending money. You might be new to budgeting, or you've been keeping one for years. Either way, you know how essential a plan can be for smart spending during the holiday season.

Holiday spending should be planned and purposeful. A budget, purpose and priorities can help you put the right foot forward financially this holiday season.

One way to start is by making a budget. Starting a holiday budget sooner rather than later will save you unnecessary stress, and while it might seem like it’s too soon to detail out how much money you want to spend this season, you'll thank yourself.
4. Shop alone — or with a trusted friend

The confusion and chaos of shopping with kids or a spouse can lead you to make purchases without thinking or to buy stuff to pacify the noisy little ones. Shopping solo may give you a calmer, more in-control experience.

If you must shop with someone else, make it a trusted friend. Ask for the friend’s help staying focused on avoiding unplanned purchases.

5. Shop your own closet

If you have a shopping problem, you probably also have a closet problem — as in you’ve got more stuff packed in there than you need. Satisfy your hunter-gatherer impulses by trying on clothes you haven’t worn in a while, finding new looks and combinations.

6. Channel the impulse

Look for gratifying, cheap ways to quench your hunter-gatherer impulse. Expressing your creativity — crafting, painting, carving or baking — is another way to satisfy your weary soul.

7. Plan your splurges

Total withdrawal from shopping probably isn’t possible. Try setting aside funds for sporadic treats – once a week or maybe once a month – and pledge not to indulge yourself otherwise.

8. Start using a spending plan

Nothing’s more helpful in getting spending under control than having a realistic grip on your finances. You probably know that a budget is the way to do that. But you may not know how rewarding budgeting can be.

9. Stop shopping as entertainment

If hitting the mall with friends is undermining your finances, change your idea of entertainment. Find other things to do with any friends who are impulsive spenders. And make friends who are careful with money and successful at saving. Their habits will likely rub off on you.

10. Don’t buy anything you can’t return

If you have saved receipts and purchased items you can return, undo the damage after you sober up from a shopping binge.

Before taking out your wallet in a store, ask about the return policy. Don’t shop a sale if purchases are final.

11. Get help

If overspending is damaging your finances, relationships or self-respect, get the help and support you need. 

Debtors Anonymous is a free, 12-step program whose purpose is “threelfold: to stop incurring unsecured debt, to share our experience with the newcomer and to reach out to other debtors.”

Financial counseling is part of your Village Employee Assistance Program benefit. To meet with someone about your spending or saving habits, call 1-800-627-8220 and tell them you want to make an appointment with a Financial Counselor using your Village EAP.

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