



Holiday Shopping Tips To Keep You Free Of Debt Stress

As retailers move into the holiday shopping season earlier and earlier, it is more important than ever for consumers to avoid getting caught up in the hysteria and instead heed some money and credit management advice to keep the holiday season happy and free of debt stress. With this in mind, Family Foundations offers the following information and advice on how to avoid overspending and maintain good financial health during the upcoming holiday season:

- **Develop a spending budget.** Write down household and personal expenses for November and December. For each month, subtract the total amount of expenses from your monthly take-home pay. The amount left over each month becomes a starting point to gauge how much you can afford to spend. Make a list of purchases from gifts to decorations.
- **Make a list. Follow Santa's example.** Make a list of all the people you need or want to buy gifts for, including small gifts for babysitters, teachers, newspaper deliverers, etc. These small gifts can add up and are often the cause of going over your gift budget. Include money you'll spend on Christmas cards, postage, holiday parties, decorations, holiday entertainment, etc.
- **Consider creative gift-giving.** When it comes to gifts, some people still believe, it's the thought that counts. Consider gifts that have a personal touch, such as hand-made and homemade gifts like tapestries, quilts, pastries or other prepared foods. Don't forget about fruit baskets, which are both economical and healthy.
- **Look for shopping deals.** Check out retail sales, special discounts and coupons in circulars or newspapers and deals online. Consider purchasing holiday decorations in-bulk and splitting the costs with friends and family members. These deals can add up to substantial savings.
- **Avoid last-minute shopping. Shopping under stress can lead to more spending.** Plan your shopping trips in advance and shop as early as possible before the December holidays.
- **Pay with cash when possible and spend wisely. Stick to your spending limit.** Pay with cash when possible and leave your checkbook and credit cards at home to avoid temptations for unplanned and unnecessary purchases. If using credit is a must, limit purchases to one card. Use the credit card with the lowest interest rate and don't use more credit than you can afford to pay off in 90 days or less. Remember, credit card debt amounts to a short-term loan. The longer the length of the loan, the more you will pay.
- **Avoid the post-holiday debt hangover and don't overspend:** Tally the receipts from all holiday expenses, including gifts, postage, meals, entertainment and decorations. Once you've completed your shopping list, stop shopping! More mall time can amount to more spending.

Family Foundations stands ready to help. To reach us, call (904) 396-4846 or go online to www.familyfoundations.org.

About Family Foundations

You don't have to solve your financial problems alone. Family Foundations has trained and certified credit counselors who offer financial management and debt reduction services. Family Foundations is a nonprofit, community-based organization and a Member of the National Foundations for Credit Counseling (NFCC). For more information on Family Foundations, call (904) 396-4846 or visit www.familyfoundations.org.