

DCC Dollars & Sense

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Smart Spending & Staying Sane – during the holidays

Special points of interest:

- Simple, Personalized Gift Ideas!
- Sharing Holliday Expenses!
- Staying within your budget!

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” That’s how the lyrics of this joyful holiday tune begin. What types of emotions and feelings does the approaching holiday season evoke in you? The impending gathering of family and friends, tasty meals, the exchanging of gifts, traditions, and such, may arouse a variety of emotions.

Our goal is to provide some helpful tips to keeping the season enjoyable. Statistics show that *anxiety* is the predominant emotion exhibited by Americans during the holiday season. And when asked what’s at the root of their anxiety, the overwhelming majority reply “money”. In some cases, it’s whether or not they have enough, or how they’ll be judged for how much they spend or buy. There’s excitement about the hefty grocery bill for the holiday feasts, or fulfilling the children’s wish lists. The list of financial concerns is potentially endless.

What’s the solution to maintaining our sanity and truly enjoying this valuable time spent with loved ones?

Stay Within Your Budget!

Examine your finances and be realistic about what you can afford to spend during this holiday season, while staying current with all other financial obligations. *For help with creating a budget, see our July 2006 issue, Promoting Prosperity – Away From Debt.*

A considerable amount of energy is sometimes spent on figuring out what to buy for particular people. If you’re giving to people that are close to you, this task becomes easier. Think about each individual and the relationship you share. Consider where you like to go and the activities you enjoy. This thought process will lead you in a direction to a gift with value beyond dollars spent, and that will bring a smile to the gift receiver’s face.

The following are 5 ideas to reduce spending and stress:

- 1) Suggest drawing names and do a gift exchange, instead of buying gifts for every person. You may choose to do this only with the adults, which works well to free up funds to shop for children.
- 2) Share the grocery bill with loved ones or have each person, or family joining in the festivities take responsibility for one dish. There’s no reason any one person should take on the entire feast preparation, unless you want

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to. And there's nothing wrong with that, so long as your finances are in check.

3) Give greeting cards. Do not overextend yourself; if gifts are more than you can afford this season, a simple card will do. Let children be responsible for making the greeting cards; they'll enjoy being included. Take a moment and join in with them. Often times, the most valuable gifts are those we create with our own hands.

Another route for greeting cards are websites or software that either have card selections, or assist you in creating one. Try www.crayola.com and select "send a card".

4) Do you have a skill, or are you crafty? Make gifts and toys, or give gift certificates for your own skill (massage, painting, plumbing, hair-dressing, etc.) Be careful; craft supplies can sometimes add up to a pretty penny.

45 Recycle decorations, and put lights on a timer. This lessens the opportunity for the

electric bill to get out of control. Saving and reusing holiday decorations not only helps reduce spending, it also reduces clutter and maximizes storage space.

Keep in Mind What the Holiday Season is All About

Think about what the holiday season really means to you and your loved ones. This can serve as an instant elixir. After all, this is a time for love, joy, and sharing. None of those involve anxiety.

Limit the people you shop for to your loved ones. Share the household chores with the entire family, and enjoy the season and festivities together.

Overextend on Love and Holiday Spirit

No matter the climate in the area you spend the holiday season, give the gift of the warmth of your smile and friendly spirit.

Valori's Corner

As humans, sometimes we do strange things; we shop and spend money we don't have on things we don't need to impress people we don't particularly care for. Often times, they're doing the same thing. Be honest with yourself, and stop concerning yourself with impressing or pleasing others.

Getting control of your finances and sticking to your budget plan will allow you to put aside funds for more extravagant spending in the holiday seasons to come. You will have the choice to spend more money if you choose to, while continuing to focus on the ones you love, and the moments that are priceless.

Happy Holidays!