



# 11 TIPS TO KEEP FROM *overspending*

By Marilyn Lewis | MoneyTalksNews.com

**S**hopping can cause problems, whether you are a compulsive shopper or an occasional impulse buyer. Spending more than you can afford, running a balance on credit cards and feeling stressed out from debt – all of these behaviors can pose a risk to your financial stability.

Turning the pattern around involves changing habits. Here are tips, strategies and skills to help stop impulse spending.

## 1. SHOP ONLY FROM A LIST

Using a list keeps you focused. Write down what you need, take that to the store, and do not buy anything that's not on the list. It's that simple.

Making lists clears your head

and helps calm you when you're on overload. Binge shopping often is a refuge from stress, so keeping stress from escalating is key.

## 2. PROCRASTINATE

When you get the urge to buy, give yourself a cooling-off period – an hour, a day or a week. It's a chance to come to your senses and make certain the item you want is something you can afford that truly contributes to your life.

## 3. SHOP WITH CASH

Leave the plastic at home. Take enough cash to purchase what you need and no more. You can't spend what you don't have.

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## *Smart Holiday* SPENDING ADVICE

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

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## 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 "threefold: 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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later. Making a budget will help you understand how much you can feasibly spend while considering your purchase priorities. Not sure how much money to set aside or what you should be spending? Look at your last year's holiday expenses. Were you satisfied? Did you live within your means, or were you pinching pennies? Analyzing your spending habits will help you understand how much money you can dedicate to gifts, decorations, food, and travel this holiday season.

Swipe your credit card with **purpose**. Using credit cards for your holiday shopping can be helpful if you're strategic, or stressful if you're unprepared. Only use your credit card if you're able to make your minimum payments in the months after your purchases. Stay on top of your minimum payment due date, along with keeping track of your APR rates. Keep those factors in mind before you use your credit card. Lastly, using a card with cashback opportunities or special deals might help you save in the long run.

Be aware of your **purchase priorities**. It can be hard to not feel overwhelmed by buying the newest gadgets or picking out a special gift for every person in your life. Generosity isn't a bad thing, but drastically straying from your budget can be. Consider your budget as you shop, and stay firm in your decisions to save money in places where it's appropriate. At the end of the day, the holidays are about spending time with your loved ones, not stressing over how you'll make it happen.

## WORRIED ABOUT DEBT?

We can help! Financial counseling is part of your EAP.

Call 1-800-627-8220 for more info.