

EAP Newsletter – April 2026

Spending Habits to Get You Where You Want to Go in Life

It's not easy being a smart spender in a world where consumers are constantly goaded to buy now and worry about the consequences of their purchase decisions later. But according to personal financial experts, good things come to those who practice wise spending habits.

“If you want to be able to do things like buy a home or a car, take a trip or even start a business, smart spending is the only way to get there,” said Jude Boudreaux, CFP®, founder of Upperline Financial in New Orleans, La. “On the other hand, if you're not smart about what you're spending, you are going to limit your future choices. You may have less to spend on the things you really want, and you may even have to work longer before retirement.”

Smart spending gives a person the best chance of living life on their own terms, fulfilling their dreams and avoiding financial hardship. The alternative, as enticing as it might seem at the moment, is sure to invite financial problems, from a heavy debt burden and depleted bank account to a later, and less comfortable, retirement.

Being a smart spender doesn't mean being overly frugal or denying yourself things you really want or need. Nor does it necessarily mean spending less. Rather, said Boudreaux, it's a matter of prioritizing — choosing to spend your hard-earned dollars on things that will help you fulfill your life goals and aspirations. Would the money you spend on restaurant meals be better put toward a trip or a graduate degree, for example?

Try applying these seven suggestions to your own situation and you'll be on your way to a fulfilling and financially stable future:



- **Track your spending.** Whether with a pad and pencil or computer software, start keeping records of exactly what you're spending money on, from necessities to discretionary items.
- **Commit to following a plan.** A spending strategy that, based on your income, specifies how you'll use your money, preferably on a weekly instead of monthly basis. The Financial Planning Association's website includes several resources to help consumers develop a spending plan.
- **Set goals that are realistic.** Having goals in mind, such as buying a home or saving for an exotic vacation, can provide the motivation to stick to a spending plan. But be sure those goals aren't too aggressive. Set modest savings targets to start, then adjust them over time.
- **Use cash instead of plastic.** Doing so not only limits your debt burden, it helps you resist the temptation to spend money you don't have, asserts Boudreaux. "I'm a big believer in using cash whenever you can because it helps crystallize the decisions you make and the priorities you have about money. It's a great scorecard."
- **Resist temptation.** The compulsion to buy an item you don't necessarily need can be strong. To resist the urge, remind yourself of the big picture — how your choices will impact meeting your long-term goals, the guilt you may feel later about an impulse purchase, etc. Also, avoid places and situations where you're likely to spend money unwisely, Boudreaux suggests.
- **Give yourself room for spontaneity.** Don't get carried away here! Build enough flexibility into your spending plan to accommodate occasional unplanned purchases.
- **Lean on someone for support.** Couples may find it much easier to practice smart spending habits and resist temptation if they both buy into the program. Given their personal finance expertise, financial planners can provide singles and couples alike with valuable advice, guidance and support. Visit FPA's national database of personal finance experts at www.FPAnet.org/PlannerSearch/PlannerSearch.aspx to find one near you.

Techniques for Improving Sleep

Many people struggle with not only the quantity of sleep they get each night, but also the quality. Your sleep habits can impact all areas of your life—from your school and work performance to relationships—so it's important to find a routine that works for you. Here are some techniques to help you improve your sleep routine.

Stick to a consistent schedule.

Aim to go to bed around the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning. This takes a bit of discipline on days when you don't have to wake up as early. However, the consistency will make it easier to fall asleep and develop a healthy sleep pattern.

Create a bedtime routine.

By doing the same routine each night, your brain knows it's time to start winding down. For example, an hour or so before bed, brush your teeth and wash your face. If you typically watch TV or have your phone out before bed, try putting all screens away and reading instead.

Try stretching.

Light stretching before bed can also help settle down your body and mind. Try doing some easy stretches for 10 or 15 minutes. It helps put you in a relaxed state so you can fall asleep faster.

Write down reminders.

Some people have a hard time turning off their brains when they are trying to fall asleep. Write down any reminders for yourself so that you can let your mind forget about it until tomorrow.

Meditate to calm your mind.

Try sitting in a comfortable position and closing your eyes. Focus on your breath. At first, try sitting still for just a few breaths. Each night, add a few more breaths until you have worked up to at least a few minutes.

Try sleep apps or music.

There are numerous mobile apps geared toward improving sleep, as well as different types of music that can help you relax, such as 432 Hz. Sound machines can be helpful too.

Lastly, make sure you are comfortable! The right pillow can go a long way. Also, a mattress topper is an economical way to upgrade your mattress without buying a new one. If nothing seems to work, consult your doctor to properly diagnose and treat sleep conditions.