

Bah Humbug My Foot

Some people dread the holidays and maybe not so much for the holidays themselves, but the financial hangover afterwards. I'm about to cliché myself to death here, but I've got some things I would like to inject into your holidays. Your family and friends would not want you to financially hurt yourself by buying gifts for them. If all you can afford is a card – so be it – or you may just have to fold an 8 ½ x 11 piece of copy paper in half and make your own. Make a batch of cookies and give each member of your family one dozen cookies and a homemade card with a family memory maker written in it. You don't want to spend \$500 on December 24 and be overdrawn by \$400 on Dec. 31st.

Also, there are a lot of extra expenses included in any holiday season - expenses that add up to royal budget busters. Expensive appetizers, extra food, paper products, gas to travel to a far destination, travel food, gifts...when some of you are already having trouble paying for the *regular maintenance of life – you know, the things like rent, utilities, groceries – the NEEDS of life.*

The WANTS and their lucrative marketing of smoke and mirrors salesmanship during this holiday season can be overwhelming. You just simply have to say “Is this a need or a want?” And the word NO helps a lot too.

Just because you “have always done it that way” doesn't mean that it has to be done that way the rest of your life. Your brother has 7 people in his family and you have a total of 2 and for years it has been a \$10 Limit for gifts...maybe you could suggest a white elephant exchange of some kind for next Christmas. \$70 is a lot to your pocketbook and \$20 is a lot to his wallet – seek out suggestions on what people might want to do next Christmas.

Make it considerably easier and cheaper for everyone involved. Everything else has gone up and this is really one of the most controllable items in your budget that there is to work with as far as eliminating costs.

My very first Christmas of penny pinching was hard, but I can tell you that in January it sure felt good to know that I had not contributed to the existing debt load that I already had. You have to take care of you and your core family first – no one else is going to do it for you. That's all I have to say. Happy Holidays and shop using your selectively spending equation by keeping more of your money in your own pocket. Don't let a few days in December ruin your finances for years to come.