



Simple ways to spend less

Every time I try to “tighten my belt” and spend less, something peculiar happens. As soon as I deny myself things-- I want those things more than ever. Everything lures me and not having it creates a gnawing need. As I’ve worked my way down the simplicity path I’ve found a few tricks that help me save without feeling deprived:

1) Prepare mentally. Saving really is a mental thing. If I operate from a point of lack-- I start to feel a “ need.” So I have to remind myself to focus on what I have, *not* on what I can’t have. In 1996 a dear friend gave me *Simple Abundance* by Sarah Ban Breathnach. I highly recommend it. I view Sarah as the pioneer of the whole gratitude movement. One of the quotes from her book is from Melody Beattie, “*Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more.*” These days, I write down the things I am thankful for in a journal and/or offer a prayer of thanks.

2) Stay away from temptation. The best trick is to avoid the stores. That takes care of impulse purchases. I try to avoid Target because it’s way too enticing for me. I’ve also joined Green Dimes which has halted the catalog temptation coming straight to my door.

3) Cut out the extras. There are a lot of little purchases that add up over time. It’s pretty painless to eliminate: a cup of coffee, eating-out*, cable, magazines, books or movies. If any of those seem too extreme, try a compromise. We don’t have cable, but we do have Netflix. If I give up eating-out, I might add something from the bakery or deli to the grocery list.

4) Sort through stuff. Often I find that I already own what I need, I just forgot I had it. When a new cookbook was enticing me, I remembered that I had a year’s worth of back issues to FOOD magazine. I reached for a new candle at the store but put it back and went home to look for the candle stash in my prop room. Success.

5) Help others. Compared to much of the planet we have rich lives. When I start to think about helping others, it takes my mind off my wants. I’ve learned a lot from a friend who is going on his second mission trip to Haiti. He decided to collect 7,000 pairs of gently used shoes to ship to Haiti. His enthusiasm has made everyone around him want to help!

* I read in Redbook (Jan. ’08) that if you eat out twice a month instead of once a week you could save \$1,080 a year. If you bring your lunch to work three days a week you could save up to \$1,050 a year.

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