

# MEAP Quarterly

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## Healthy Holiday Budget

The holiday season can be stressful in more than one way. Considering that the National Retail Federation projects that shoppers will spend an average of \$1,047.83 this year, it will be important to find ways to save money and make the most out of your budget. The following 8 budgeting tips put out by Ellen Chang in an article of *The Street* should help you enjoy the 2019 holiday season and spend less time worrying about credit card bills.

1. **Secret Santa:** Start a Secret Santa to add an element of surprise for your family or group of friends while spending less money. Instead of buying for 3 or 5, buy for one!
2. **Shop Online:** Malls

and shopping centers can suck you into spontaneous purchases or deals so shop online, although be sure to check for hidden costs associated with shipping.

3. **Make a List:** A complete list will outline your plan based on what you can afford.
4. **Give Gifts of Service:** Thoughtful gifts such as babysitting or other services in addition to inexpensive crafts can make great gifts. Baked goods or photos are just two ideas.
5. **Regift:** If you receive a gift that you don't need or want and know that a loved one would enjoy it, consider regifting.

Your loved ones don't want you going into debt either!

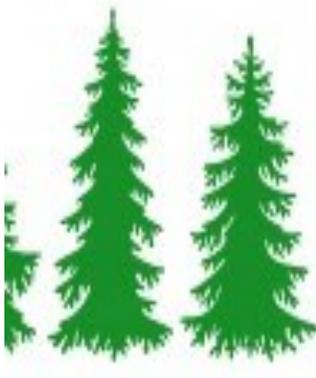
6. **Use Reward Points and Miles:** Your existing rewards points and miles could turn into free or discounted travel, cash back, gift cards, or merchandise.
7. **Shop Through Credit Card and Airline Portals:** Logging into a website like the Chase Ultimate Rewards portal, Rakuten, or others, will allow you to earn bonus points or cash back.
8. **Treat Yourself:** Similar to a diet, it helps when you allow some leeway.

## Local Yoga Practice

In a previous issue, we included a story on the renovations at Howard Park in South Bend, and now that it is officially open to the public, we encourage you to head over and enjoy its beauty. If you are interested in trying yoga, there is a Yoga For Everyone class at

Howard Park starting December 3rd, which will be offered Tuesday evenings at 5:30pm. It is a free, one hour class available to the community, however donations are appreciated. Although held at the park, the class itself will take place indoors at the new facility

there. Still need convincing? Harvard Medical School identifies the following health benefits of yoga: better body image, heart health benefits, overall fitness improvement, mindful eating, and weight control. Head over to Howard Park to try it out for yourself!



## Holiday Beverages and Mocktails



*Snowy and Bright*

As you gear up to host your holiday family gathering or plan to invite friends over for a cozy dinner this winter, consider having non-alcoholic beverages available to offer those who may be cutting back their alcohol use or in recovery. This can be as simple as having coffee, tea, and soda available as well as flavored sparkling water. Here we've included a recipe for a holiday mocktail.

The ingredients you'll need are apple juice, cranberry juice, sprite, cranberries, and rosemary.

### Directions:

In a glass mix equal parts apple juice and cranberry juice. Add a dash of Sprite, and garnish with cranberries and a sprig of rosemary.



## Secrets to Enjoying a Long Winter

Based on research done by Kari Leibowitz of Stanford University, there are several ways to proactively enjoy the winter season. She completed research in Norway on the overall mental health of residents there and discovered there are several key lessons to take from Norwegians that allow them to have lower rates of seasonal depression. Laura Vanderkam outlined the lessons in a *Fast Company* article.

What is the difference?

Norwegians view winter as something to be enjoyed and not something to be endured.

Although there are cultural differences that we may not be able to replicate exactly, there are four ideas to consider integrating into your lifestyle this winter. The first is to celebrate the things that one can only do in winter, such as skiing, sledding, and ice skating, among other activities. Because getting outside is understood to be a mood booster, Norwegians continue to

spend time outdoors throughout the winter, going as far as to say that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”.

**Koselig, the Norwegian word for a sense of coziness, is one way people care for themselves and each other in the winter season.**

Norwegians also have a word, *koselig*, for a sense of coziness, which encourages people to cultivate coziness using candles, fires, warm beverages, fuzzy blankets, etc. This goes beyond individual homes to the greater community, as people gather for festivals and other activities during the season.

It is also important to take note of the beautiful aspects of winter. In Norway, the sun doesn't rise above the horizon, which means that for multiple hours a day, it can look like sunrise and sunset. The sky's colors against the snow can be uniquely beautiful, among other sights of win-

ter.

The article ends with a plea from Leibowitz to consider a mindset shift, as she recognizes that in the States we often bond by complaining about the winter. It is hard to be positive when we make small talk through our complaining. She encourages us to simply refuse to participate in the “Misery Olympics”. Instead, talk about how the cold gives you a chance to drink hot tea or chocolate; talk about building a snowman; bundle up and go for a walk outside, as we'll feel warmer and happier after a few minutes. In fact, it can be even easier than any of those ideas, as just conscientiously trying to have a positive wintertime mindset might be enough to induce it.



## Winter 2019

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**Michiana Employee  
Assistance Program**

[aarcinfo.org](http://aarcinfo.org)



**Michiana Employee Assistance Program is available throughout the winter season to support you and your family in managing concerns such as holiday stress, grief and loss, seasonal or other mood issues, and beyond. We are also able to support you in establishing and working toward goals for the new year, adjusting to new changes or life transitions, integrating a mindfulness or gratitude practice, altering your nutrition or exercise routines, increasing your social connection, and more.**

## Crock Pot or Slow Cooker Soup: Butternut Squash with Sausage

There is something about coming home from work to a prepared, cozy soup. If you leave work at 5:00 pm, it is dark and cold, and your appetite is likely calling for something warm and comforting. Slow cooker recipes can make after work meals much more simple. Consider trying this recipe for a butternut squash with sausage, found on the *allrecipes* website.

### Ingredients:

No-stick Cooking Spray

2 (8 count) cans of Tomato sauce with basil, garlic, and oregano (such as Hunt's brand)

2 cups water

1 (12oz) package of refrigerated

butternut squash pieces

\*1 (12oz) package frozen chopped butternut squash will work too

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1 lb bulk Italian pork sausage

1/2 cup dry ditalini pasta, uncooked

\*Or other small pasta such as macaroni, orzo, small shells

1 (6oz) package of baby spinach leaves

### Directions:

Spray inside of 4-quart slow cooker with cooking spray and then add tomato sauce, water, squash, and garlic powder. Stir to combine.

Pinch sausage into bite-size pieces and place in slow cooker.

Cover; cook on low for 7.5 hours or

high for 3.5 hours.

Stir in pasta and spinach and then cover and cook on high for 30 minutes or more until pasta is tender.

Enjoy this hearty soup after work or shoveling the driveway!

