

Reconnect Corner

Winter 2024

Start 2024 with Frugal Living

With a new year comes new resolutions and goals. What's your vision for 2024? Many people will be setting financial goals, and with higher costs of living and consumer debt on the rise, a popular movement for 2024 is frugal living. But what is frugal living exactly? A common myth is that it means spending almost nothing and going without – but that isn't true. Frugal living is defined as a lifestyle that focuses on saving money and placing importance on minimalism.

One easy place to start living a frugal lifestyle is through your **household and food expenses**. Start by understanding the flow of your finances – what's coming in and going out of your home. Then look for areas where you can cut back. You may be able to save on things like household expenses, apps and subscriptions, entertainment, personal items/services, and even groceries. In fact, with the rising cost of food, here are some tips that could help you save on **groceries**:

- Set a food budget
- Create meal plan
- Shop with a list
- Purchase items in bulk
- Use coupons and apps
- Change where you shop
- Eat at home or bring lunches to work
- Purchase produce that is in season
- Consider growing or regrowing your own food. Things like green onions, celery, and lettuce are easy to regrow. If this is a concept you haven't heard of before, visit foodrevolution.org to learn more.



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PROGRAM LINKS

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Another area where prices seem to be rising is basic household expenses. Here are some tips to help you save on **household expenses:**



- Cancel your landline and contact your cell phone provider to ask about discounted plans
- Review other services and contact your providers to ask about bundling and discounts.
- Review your insurance, television/cable, streaming services, internet, and gym plans.
- Unplug appliances and turn off lights that are not in use
- Stop using paper/plastic single use items
- Complete your own home repairs when you can
- Declutter and sell unused items
- Adjust the setting on your thermostat to save on utilities
- Hang clothes outside instead of using the dryer
- Use homemade cleaning products...that actually work!
- Become a one car household, use public transport, walk, bike, or carpool to save on gas.

You might also begin to live more frugally by simply differentiating between wants and needs.

While 'needs' – things like housing, transportation and food – are necessary for survival, 'wants' are additional expenses that aren't necessary. Just cutting back on wants like travel, entertainment, designer clothing, gym memberships, dining out, and buying new items can add up to significant savings. You might also try planning no-spend weekends throughout the year – take time to read books, play games, work in your yard, go to the park, plan a picnic lunch...you get the idea!

Once you are ready to start living a frugal lifestyle, identify how to best incorporate it into your life. Start by visualizing what you want your life to be, and then set your frugal living goals. Just like with any change, stay the course and don't get discouraged. **You might find that living a frugal lifestyle has more benefits than just saving money.**

Change for the New Year

For many of us, the start of a new year is a time of change and growth.

Changing a routine, behavior, or habit can have many rewards. You may be asking yourself, "How do I know if I'm ready to change this action, behavior or thing in my life?" If you're thinking about making a change or starting a new habit, begin by asking yourself a few questions. You might even consider writing down your answers – if there are times when you're feeling unmotivated or distracted, revisit your answers to help stay on track and continue working towards your goal. **Ask yourself:**

- How will my life transform for the better?
- What advantages will I get from making this change?
- Why do I want to make this change?
- How will my goals, life, or abilities be affected by this new routine, behavior or habit?
- How important is this transformation to me?



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For More Information

recon.mmiuniversity.org
money.mmiuniversity.org/reconnect

MSCCN

msccn.org

NCHV

nchv.org

TAPS

taps.org

Operation Homefront

operationhomefront.org

America's Warrior Partnership

americaswarriorpartnership.org

VETSEDU

vetsedu.org

The articles in this newsletter are provided for informational purposes only and are not intended as credit repair or tax advice.

Regardless of what goal or change you're committed to achieving, participating in supportive community events can help you be successful. The VA offers ongoing outreach events to help you stay connected and achieve your goals. Visit [Outreach & Events | Outreach Events | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#) to search for events online and in your area. Here are some other veteran specific resources to help you stay connected:

- [Mindfulness Meditation: Managing challenges and stressors of everyday life](#)
- [Franchising Bootcamp for Veterans](#)
- [Wellbeing YOU from the American Red Cross and Veteran Caregiver Network \(MVCN\)](#)
- Connect with peers for support in a text-only [Online Caregiver Chat](#)

Maximizing Military Benefits

From buying a home to local discounts, your status as a military member or veteran comes with several advantages. In fact, in the [End of Year Veteran Benefits Update](#), the VA reported delivering \$150 billion in benefits in 2023 alone.

One thing contributing to this record number of benefits received is the [PACT Act](#), which expands care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances by adding to the list of health conditions caused by exposure. With more benefits available to military members and their families than ever before, this is a good time to make sure you're taking advantage of the benefits you deserve. Check out these resources to help you identify and maximize your military benefits:

- [2024 Guide to Military Benefits for Members and Veterans](#) from the Military Benefit Association
- [VA Benefits for Military Veterans](#) from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- [Your 2024 State Veteran Benefits](#) from Military.com for benefits available by state
- [Retail Military Discount Guide](#) from dealnews.com