Union Assistance Program
A division of ESI

November 2026 Newsletter

Holiday Hacks for a Happy Season!

The holidays can bring joy and connection, but they can also include a fair amount of pressure. When money is tight or life is complicated, expectations can feel especially heavy. You don't need a picture-perfect celebration to have a meaningful season. These ten tips can help you make room for what matters.

1. **Make a spending plan.** Set a holiday budget that includes gifts, food, travel, decorations, and other extras. Decide what you can comfortably afford before shopping, use price comparison apps and websites, and track purchases as you go. A bargain only saves money if it fits your plan.
2. **Give more, spend less.** Suggest a gift exchange, spending limits, or gifts just for children. Homemade treats, a shared outing, or help with a household task can be thoughtful alternatives. Talk about changes early so everyone knows what to expect.
3. **Put your benefits to work.** Explore your MAP's online budgeting tools and financial resources – and be sure to check for substantial savings in Member Discounts. Personal assistant services may help you find local resources or simplify seasonal tasks. Check which benefits are available to you and your household.
4. **Plan holiday meals carefully.** Potluck gatherings where everyone contributes can alleviate the financial burden. Research budget-friendly recipes and shop strategically, taking advantage of sales and coupons.
5. **Protect your breathing room.** Choose a few priorities instead of saying yes to everything. Share responsibilities, simplify meals, and leave open space on your calendar. A polite "I can't this time" can help keep commitments manageable.
6. **Care for yourself, too.** Make time for rest, regular meals, movement, and activities you enjoy. Notice when you feel overwhelmed and take a break or reach out to someone you trust. Remember that your MAP has great coaching and other tools for stress management, and counseling is available 24/7 via telephone, chat, text, and more. Your needs deserve a place on the holiday list.
7. **Plan for family friction.** Set realistic expectations and decide which topics you'd prefer to avoid. Have a calm response ready: "Let's talk about something else." Shorter visits, separate gatherings, or an agreed departure time may make celebrations more comfortable.
8. **Allow traditions to change.** Divorce, grief, caregiving, or other life changes may call for a different celebration. Keep comforting traditions, change others, or start something new. When children are involved, explain plans clearly and keep their needs central. Leave room for mixed emotions.
9. **Keep safety in the season.** Avoid rushing on the road, arrange a safe ride if drinking, and watch for suspicious shopping links or payment requests. Follow cooking and decorating safety basics. Give yourself permission to stay home when ill.
10. **Be generous with yourself and with others.** Forgive yourself and forgive others. Perform random acts of unexpected kindness for strangers. You don't have to handle holiday challenges alone. Your MAP can offer confidential support, practical resources, and help finding your way through a difficult season.

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Featured

November Webinar

5 Strategies to Actually Enjoy the Holidays This Year

The holidays are often portrayed as a time of good cheer and family connection but, often, many of us feel busy, pressured, or lonely. Do things differently this year with a strategy that works. Get 5 tips to guide you in creating a plan to navigate your personal holiday situation.

To access this Webinar and related resources, simply log in to www.UnionAP.com during November.

Giving Thanks

With Thanksgiving ahead, it's a great time to practice gratitude. Think about who you'd like to acknowledge with thanks. We have a few ideas, starting with our active-duty military as well as our veterans. We also owe deep gratitude to our healthcare workers, educators, first responders, caregivers, and volunteers. We're also indebted to our employers and members, our providers, partners, and colleagues. **Who's on your gratitude list this year?**

November Training Selections

We offer a few online video training suggestions from our vast selection of learning topics, or search for your own themes. Simply click on **"Member Login"** at www.UnionAP.com, sign in, and click on the comprehensive training library in the **"Training Center."**

- **NEW! 4 Top Skills for Customer Service Excellence | Course ID: SVL_0664301**
  For both internal and external customers, outstanding service makes a key difference in building customer loyalty. In this 40-minute course, learn top skills to help you become a true service champion.

- **NEW! Building Confidence | Course ID: SVL_104616**
  In this 18-minute video training, learn how confidence works: what it is, what it isn't, how it develops, and which strategies you can apply on a daily basis to take your confidence in yourself and your abilities to the next level.

- **Personal Financial Health: Setting Your Budget | Course ID: SVL_1020543**
  In this 7-minute video, learn key steps for creating a budget, examining current spending habits, categorizing expenses, and adjusting your budget to ensure expenses don't exceed income and every dollar is tracked.

Access Your MAP Training Center

1. Go to www.UnionAP.com and click the **'Member Login'** button.
2. If you've already created an account, log in with your Username/Password.
3. If it's your first time, click **REGISTER** to create your Username and Password. *You only need to register once.*
4. Click the **'Training Center'** and then choose **'Comprehensive Training Library'**.
5. **In the Search bar at the top of the screen,** type the course code or search for a topic.
6. Click the course icon and click the **'Play'** or **'Start'** button to begin.

To get a certificate: View the course and take the quiz. Not all courses require a quiz, but if so, **you must score at least 80%** for a certificate. To download your certificate to your computer, click the ribbon icon below the right corner of the video.

Key November Dates

- National Family Caregivers Month
- American Diabetes Month
- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
- National Epilepsy Awareness Month
- Alzheimer's Awareness Month
- **11/11 -** Veterans Day
- **11/12 -** World Pneumonia Day
- **11/14 -** World Diabetes Day
- **11/19 -** Great American Smokeout
- **11/26 -** Thanksgiving

Scan to Learn More!

Explore More of Your Member Benefits

Download Talkspace Go For iPhone Or Android

How to Scan A QR Code

1. Open the camera app.
2. Select the rear-facing camera in photo mode.
3. Center the QR code you want to scan on the screen and hold your phone steady for a couple of seconds.
4. Tap the notification that pops up to open the link. (You will need to be connected to the internet to do this.)