



Beating Holiday Stress

The Christmas holidays can be a time of great joy! Spending time with family and friends, trimming the Christmas tree, baking, shopping, caroling, mailing, cooking ...Whew!

These things can also be stressful when combined with the usual stresses of our everyday lives, winter colds, alienation or distance from family and friends, memories of disappointing Holiday seasons past and that overwhelming sense of materialism that seems to come over us and our children at this time of year. I've put together some tips for making the holidays a less stressful and more a meaningful season for ourselves and our families. If its too late for this year, save these ideas for next year, but talk about them with your family now and get them all on board!

Priorities

Remember the true goals of the holiday season, talk about them with your family, write them down and keep a card in view to remind you when the hectic demands begin. When too busy, focus on achieving a balance between spiritual and temporal activities. Check your goals.



Unique Forms of Gift Giving

Theme Gifts: Decide a theme for your family gifts this year. Everyone gives a small gift based on the theme, perhaps to just one other person, after drawing names if it's a large group. For example:

Something green (or any color)

Funny or gag gift

Something to use in the bathroom

Something to eat

Something for the yard or garden

An item of clothing

Something homemade



The idea is to stop the pressure to ““ get”” something someone wants. When the whole family participates, it is fun and makes everyone become creative.

Coupon Gifts:

Encourage children to make coupons for special service gifts for their loved ones.

For example:

A hand massage for mom

A joke telling session for Grandma

Making toast or cookies one day

Reading a book with a little sister

Charity Gifts:

Arrange a specific way for a child to make or prepare a gift for another, perhaps something useful or something pretty. If a present is bought , then do a matching one for another child.

Participate with some of the organizations that collect gifts and distribute them for children. The best is to participate in the distribution, or have your child take the gift to the agency.

Consult your local hospitals for ideas of decorations to put in hospital ward for people who will be there over the holidays.

Local homeless shelters may need items like blankets, toiletries etc. Include your child in making up packages with items for the shelters.

Visit a nursing home and sing Christmas Carols ,, visit with a few lonely people, make table decorations for their holiday meals.

If you know a person who is  alone this holiday season, find a way to include them in some of your festivities, or visit them and have cup of cocoa together.



About Your Own Stress Level..

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The holidays are probably not a good time to try and lose weight. Make maintaining your present weight a goal and don't let your exercise routine lapse. Increase the amount of fluids your taking and plan for getting plenty of sleep. Here are some more tips for enjoying your holidays:

Laugh at anything, especially yourself. watch a comedy show or video, bring out the old corny joke books and share them!

Take a time out. A cup of tea, a walk around the block, a moment to notice nature, and remember who you are, who you were created to become.

Wild exercise! Put on some great music and dance around a bit! Do some jumping jacks, shout to the world!

Maybe skip the Christmas cards this year, if you must write to everyone, do it in February, they'll have more time to notice anyway!

Take time to think about why this season is important to you, focus on embellishing those things and de-emphasizing the things that drive you crazy!

Happy Holidays to All of You

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