



Simplify The Season: More Joy & Less Stress

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With the holiday season upon us, we sometimes allow stress to take over. It can be easy to feel like holidays are tasks nipping at our heels. But it is possible to make the season one of joy and merriment, and keep the stress at a minimum. Find ways to simplify your holidays and you'll feel more relaxed and free to enjoy the company of family and friends.

Paying attention to yourself and your personal health is a good first step. By taking care of yourself, you will have improved energy to tackle the extra tasks that come with this season. Stay hydrated, eat well and get a good night's sleep. Your brain will also thank you for slowing down and feeling less overwhelmed.

The holidays can be handled tactically as well. Start your planning early, write important things down and make lists (That is, if this isn't going to cause you more stress!) Organization and planning ahead can reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. As you are making your lists, try to keep them simple and focus on what is most important. If you would like to take on extra projects that create a festive atmosphere, consider taking a few hours or days off from work to give yourself the time. Taking time off around the holidays has proven to be a godsend for me, especially when having guests over for meals.

With the holidays come plenty of event invitations. From cookie swaps, to gift-wrapping parties, to cocktail parties to caroling events, you may find your calendar filling up. You can keep yourself from feeling frazzled by using the magic word-“no.” Free up your personal calendar by kindly declining some events. I have friends who hold annual events and it is sometimes a relief to know that I can attend in alternating years.

Another area of potential stress is gift giving. Take the focus away from gifts and move towards simply enjoying each other’s company. A wonderful approach to holiday giving includes giving of one’s “presence” as the “present.” In our family, we gift experiences, such as a hands-on workshop or adventure of some type. For us, this is a great way to imbue more meaning into a gift exchange.

Try steering clear of the malls. If you need to go to the mall, go shopping early in the morning and before the holiday rush. Online shopping is another excellent choice and can be a great way to save time and hassle.

Keep your holiday dinner simple by sharing the workload. You don’t have to do it all! Hosts should feel comfortable asking guests to bring a dish. Feel free to provide a theme and a little guidance on what to bring. Sticking with your tried and true recipes makes for relaxed meal preparation. I often count on old stand-bys when having guests for the holidays. Who says you need to make dessert? If you have a great local bakery, why not order your cakes, cookies and pies from them, leaving you a little bit more time to enjoy yourself and keep that holiday spirit.

