

# Holiday Survival Handbook

*Concrete ways to create stress-less holidays!*

GET HOLIDAY READY

**CHRISTMAS**

*is coming!*

DIMINISH YOUR HOLIDAY  
STRESS SO YOU CAN MAKE  
MORE ROOM FOR JOY

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*Fall 2019 1st Edition*

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# Let's be brutally honest.

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The holidays *can be* a charming time filled with joyful celebrations alongside loved ones and magic filled experiences of the season. ***It can also*** be a time filled with some pretty crippling stress that depletes the joy from the entire season and makes life entirely too overwhelming for you and those around you. Does that sound pretty accurate? I too have been there and felt both extremes, so I understand where you are coming from.

Remember when you were younger and the holidays were fun? Enjoyable? Magical even? Yeah...it's been awhile for me too. We all have our reasons why the holidays usually wind up being stressful and frankly, un-magical. I still want that magic for my children and to be honest, for me too. There is something about the holiday season that has always been rejuvenating for me and my family. A time to slow down, reconnect, laugh, cry, reminisce and share joy. I want to pass that type of experience down to my children and their children too. I can't if I am a miserable mess.

Over the last few years, I have noticed that the more stressed I am throughout the holidays, the more that carries over to other people and situations. I have made some significant changes in how I prepare for the holidays and I have noticed a HUGE difference in my stress level and in my joy level. It does take some planning but in the end I feel it is completely worth it because I am making more room for memories, connection with my loved

ones and for joy. I think it goes without saying that it is important to manage your stress, eating habits, drinking habits, exercise habits, sleeping habits, spending time with dysfunctional family habits. I know you get all of this already and understand that it is an important part of helping the holidays be less stressful. But what ELSE can you do to make the holidays manageable, enjoyable, magical, and joyful?

Creating reasonable expectations of yourself and the people you spend time with around the holidays is vital to understand before moving onto the concrete “Survival Tactics” list. If you expect that you are going to decorate each room with homemade décor made by you, but you still have to work, manage a home and family, cook, clean and maybe shower every now and then, then reasonably you should have started to decorate mid July. I am just saying, there is no reason to create stress because of unreasonable expectations for the holiday season.

Here is how I suggest you create those expectations. If you have a project or a gift idea in mind that you want to try to execute for your loved ones this season then follow this formula to determine how much time you should reasonably allocate to complete the project/gift idea. Estimate how long it will take you to create the gift idea for each person, then triple that. Take that unit of time and multiply that by the amount of people the project is for. The result is the time you can reasonably expect to spend creating that special gift. ***For example:*** I want to make hot cocoa mugs for my son’s teachers. I estimate that it will take me 10 minutes to assemble and wrap per mug. He has 4 teachers. Using the formula I



would say 10 minutes, tripled is actually 30 minutes. Multiplied by four teachers is 2 hours. My reasonable expectation of the time I will actually spend on creating the gift(s) overall is not 10 minutes but actually 2 hours. That two hours in reality accounts for driving to the store with my son, picking out the four mugs, picking out the hot cocoa mix, the great marshmallows or no marshmallows debate that will likely ensue in the aisles of the store, trying to find the plastic wrap that will fit the mugs, trying to find the perfect ribbon to tie it all together, and don't forget the child originated gift tags to be used with the gift. Not to mention the assembling and wrapping. Do you see why the original 10 minute estimate, in actuality will take quite a bit longer? I suggest using this formula with all that you do and plan for during the holiday season because this will naturally carve out time for you to plan your activities, plan your holiday to dos, plan your creative times and if you find you don't have the time to do these things once you have gone through the formula, then it's time to strategize your project or just not do it.

*NOTE: If you are decorating your home, estimate how long it may take you to do so, say 2 hours then triple that number creating a realistic expectation of 6 hours to decorate your home. There is no need to multiple that by the number of people that live with you, as that addition to the formula is just for gift giving.*

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# Survival Tactics

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Here are some concrete, actionable ways you can make your holidays less dysfunctional and filled with more joy.

- 1. Start your planning early!** You can start today even. Grab a notebook or open up a new Google Document and get your planning started. November 1<sup>st</sup> is a good start date to get your planning underway. Ask yourself:



1. Are you hosting any celebrations?
2. Are you traveling?
3. Are you in any gift exchanges with family? Neighbors? Co-Workers? Friends?
4. Are you baking for your family? For other celebrations? To be used as gifts?

Start to pull these plans together and see what you are directly responsible for and what you can delegate to others. Take inventory of what you have already and then create a list of what you will still need in order to host, travel, create or give.

- 2. Start your shopping early.** My family creates a “wish-list” online spreadsheet for the entire family to shop from. We start populating the wish-list in September so that as we are shopping, we can pick up things that we know others will like and appreciate. Our theory is that we would like to get something useful and wanted for the other person instead of something that may donate to Goodwill



sometime in August. This may not work for every family and that is okay. This is where #3 comes in handy.

3. **Start purchasing gift cards now!** Every time you go to the grocery store, pick up a gift card or two. I usually purchase \$25 Amazon Gift cards for my nieces and nephews because it's versatile and they love it. I actually buy gift cards throughout the year to distribute the cost and also to always have gifts on hand.



Many places can mail a gift card or gift certificate right to you through the Postal Service or via email. The other benefit to this is that you are not spending a fortune during the month of December. Purchasing gift cards all year round helps spread the cost of gift giving over many months and helps to make the holidays less financially stressful.

4. **Do not expect perfection.** Creating memories is what is important here. Create a list of the experiences you would like to have and then plan for what is reasonable for your family make up and lifestyle. Ideally, I would love to have a family skiing weekend in Whistler with my family, however, there are several factors as to why that is not going to work and why it is not reasonable for me to expect it to happen. [I live on the east coast and Vancouver is a full day of travel by plane, only half my family knows how to ski, and it is not in the budget to take all 7 of us to Whistler.] A more reasonable way to create a similar experience would be to go to a

**WE WERE  
BORN  
TO BE REAL  
NOT TO BE  
PERFECT**

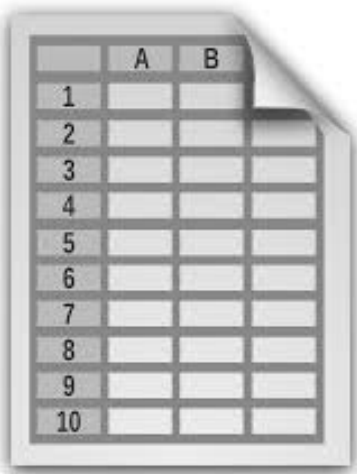
skiing mountain close by that have beginner slopes (and beginner lessons) and make a day of it, or even a weekend by utilizing an Air B and B. Plus...taking video of the non-skiing half of the family engaged in beginner skiing lessons sounds like good material for a future family movie night.

5. **Create a spreadsheet.** Create a spreadsheet of who to buy for, their interests or gift suggestions, what the budget is for each person, what you actually

purchase for them and what you actually spent on them.

Include static items such as PJs for Christmas Eve, ornaments, teacher, bus, neighbor gifts and ideas. When you have a large quantity of gifts to give like a neighbor gift or a teacher gift, look year round for those things or pieces of a project that you will create as a gift instead of paying premium dollar at prep time and gift giving time. This spreadsheet will serve you for the following year as well. You will be less likely to give your mother-in-law a portable luggage weight scale three years in a

row. [Sharing the story for a friend.] You will also be able to see how much you spent and adjust accordingly.



6. **Gather Baking Supplies.** If you plan on making baked goods, gather the recipes now and start purchasing supplies as they are going to start to be on sale. You will be prepped and ready to go for cookie making day. It will be less stressful on cookie making day when you have all of the correct supplies.



7. **Prep for shopping day.** I hate to shop in person. I understand that to shop locally is better for the economy so I desperately try to do it, but to be honest, shopping exhausts me. I think this is because I never seem to prepare for it correctly. Here are a few things to keep in mind that have worked for me recently.

1. Create a list of what you need to purchase.
2. Make the best use of your time. Create a map of where you need to go to and try and make your travels efficient.



3. Pack water, snacks and even meals to sustain your energy. Make a smoothie and place them in a cooler so that you can remain sustained all day long. Nuts and granola bars or even cut up fruit and veggies will make runs through fast food drive through less likely.

4. Download a podcast or a book to keep your interest in the car and stimulate your brain.

5. Bring your own shopping bags into the store. You are less likely to purchase more than what will fit into the bag if you bring your own bags in. It will help eliminate last minute, unneeded purchases.

8. **Schedule a wrapping day.** You have gone shopping, now it is time to wrap the presents! I love to make my packages and presents look unique and special. It's part of the gift giving experience for me. I find it difficult to make each present feel special when I am up until 3 am on Christmas eve trying to get all of the wrapping done. I have tried several ways to get the wrapping done





throughout the years. I have tried the up until 3am on Christmas Eve wrapping mad session and I have tried the do a little bit at a time - but all of the supplies stay out wrapping session. Neither has worked for me, so what I did the last two years was set aside a 4-6 hour block of time, got all of my wrapping supplies out, got all of the presents together, turned on some holiday music and then went to town. I tried to have a wrapping day the first Sunday of December – which means I had to have the majority of my shopping or creating done by the first Sunday as well. The beauty of this though, is that I still have a few weeks to fill in the gaps as needed. The majority of the work is done in the beginning of the month and I am able to enjoy the celebrations throughout the season.

PRO TIP: Remember when I said start early?! I typically start the day after the holidays are over. At that point, I have fresh ideas, fresh thoughts about what worked and what didn't work, what people liked or if their interests have changed. I immediately write down any ideas I have about what I want to create for next year and start to compile the supplies as I come across them. It eliminates much last minute planning, prepping, and STRESS! I also schedule monthly check-ins to see how much progress I have made in my gift purchasing or creating. It is all about making more room for joy!

*I hope these tips that have worked well for me will create some space for you to find joy this upcoming holiday season. I would love to hear what helps you overcome stress throughout the holidays. Please email me at [christine@MoreRoomForJoy.com](mailto:christine@MoreRoomForJoy.com) with your tips and tricks to have your survival tactics included in the next edition of this document!*

*Wishing you a very happy, joy filled, stress-less holiday season.*

*Christine*