

Hints for Handling the Holiday Hassles

Carole and Ronald Krist Samaritan Center for Counseling and Education

1. Expect what is possible for you to experience. Be realistic about time, energy, money and emotional resources. Be aware of what else is happening during the holidays (i.e. end of term for schools, etc...). Most of us do not get a two month vacation from work, school, etc. for the holiday season.
2. Share the responsibilities of the holiday season. Learn to delegate. Make and use lists.
3. Set a realistic holiday budget and stick to it. Be honest with kids about gifts, costs and what they can expect, etc.
4. Pace yourself during the holidays. Balance solitude with sociability. Balance between pleasing your family and others and yourself.
5. Limit holiday time with extended family members. Keep travel to a minimum.
6. Don't use holiday time to settle old scores or resolve longstanding conflicts with other family members.
7. Acknowledge feelings of grief and loss when they are experienced during the holiday season. Set aside "letting go" time. Counter the conspiracy of silence that others may impose about your losses.
8. Beginning or changing a holiday tradition/ritual can be meaningful, especially for new and second families.
9. Reaching out is often the first step toward feeling better. Find ways to give that fit you.
10. Don't join the couch potato bake-off. Watch your alcohol consumption. Carry a "first aid" stress kit in your head and watch your diet and exercise.
11. Take the initiative and make your own plans for the holidays. Take charge of your own celebration. Establish your own priorities.
12. Avoid shopping with half the known world.
13. Plan a special gift to yourself this holiday season
14. Gift giving and receiving can be difficult for all of us. While usually pleasant, it can have a down side. Gifts can be used to manipulate by putting a person under obligation if he/she cannot or did not return a gift of equal value. Gifts can also be given to hurt others. Be aware of the different feelings and attitudes around exchanging or returning gifts as well as around giving money as a gift. Consider making gifts or giving to charity in honor of someone.
15. Nurture your relationship with God. Use the holiday season to deepen and restore your spiritual life. Remember the religious and spiritual roots and meanings of the holidays.
16. Anticipate the holidays, gauge what you need to feel better and ask for it. Remember: "There is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Be aware of your own rhythm.

Suggested Readings:

Reid, C. (1975). You Can Choose Christmas. Word Books.

Robinson, J., & Staeheli, J. C. (1991). Unplug the Christmas Machine: A Complete Guide to Putting Love and Joy Back into the Season. William Morrow Co.



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