

## December Newsletter 2021



### Happy (stress-free and how ever you want to feel) Holidays!

It's no secret the holidays can be a very stressful time of the year. Whether it's financial stress, bad memories, that awkward holiday staff

party, crazy busy schedules, or the pressure to make holidays a time of perfection or even joy. With this in mind, we wanted to make a newsletter about the holidays, and the different ways they can affect the people around us. I recently sent out a questionnaire regarding what individuals do to lighten the stress of the holidays and how to keep the holiday spirit shining. In these responses we noticed common themes...

### **We're not all "Holiday people."**

Some people have terrible holiday experiences. Maybe they associate this time with the loss of loved ones, the stress of exams, or the need to complete millions of holiday projects. For others, it may be the mere expectation that everyone NEEDS to be joyful all December long. That alone could be enough to grinch one out for the entire holiday season. Whatever the reason, some people cannot stand the holidays. However, there are others who enjoy the holidays, but they let their stress get the better of them. They can start to feel like they aren't "holiday people" even when they want to be.

### **What causes holiday burnout and stress?**

1. Feeling like you have to do EVERY holiday activity will drive you mad.  
So much to do, so little time. The holiday season lasts from Thanksgiving to the New Year. However, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanza happen BEFORE

the end of December. Leaving approximately 4 weeks (30 days) to watch every holiday movie, decorate the house, see every light show and holiday performance, and participate in any other holiday activity not mentioned on this list.

As you can imagine, trying to do everything and see everything before your specific holiday starts can feel like a race to a finish line that keeps moving further and further away. Not even Superman could watch over a hundred holiday movies, bake every holiday food and dessert imaginable, and buy all his gifts in under 30 days. Cramming it all in will make you CRAZY stressed. Eventually, you'll become so anxious to finish the list of holiday activities you prepared, that you won't actually enjoy the activities at all. You'll be consumed by moving onto the next holiday activity

## 2. Trying to be a holiday perfectionist.

Whether it be the outside lights or the inside decor, people want it to look good. For example, some people have a love-hate relationship with the wacky kid ornaments all over the tree and frosting fights in the kitchen. Especially, if they are the hosts of a large holiday party or entertaining judgy family members. A perfectly decorated home and perfectly frosted cookies sound like the start to a perfect holiday. However, having a home and dessert platter worthy of the hallmark channel would destroy all the fond holiday memories we look back on and laugh about to date. It also would take twice as long to decorate the house and bake the cookies when you do it yourself... well, maybe just the house part. Regardless, a messy kitchen and messy kids are part of the holiday fun. The best cookies are the ones where Santa is missing an eye, the jelly is spilling out, or mini chocolate fingerprints cover the smooth chocolate dipped shell. Likewise, the trees with empty spaces, family ornaments everywhere, and even the lingering heads of ornaments broken over holidays past make for the best laughs.

In addition, ditching the notion that you have to find the perfect gift, wrap everything perfectly, and make the holiday season perfect for you and your family will take all the enjoyment out of it. Instead of enjoying the moment and the family fun, you'll be caught up in the possibility that what you planned or bought wasn't good enough. The holidays should be time to let loose and relax. We question ourselves enough on a day to day basis, and bringing the need for perfectionism into the holidays will only make them more stressful and intense.

## How can we enjoy the holidays again?

1. Make a list of holiday MUST-DOs and WANT-to-dos

Avoid the holiday madness by splitting up all holiday activities into what your family feels they need to do (Holiday MUST-dos), and what they want to do (Holiday WANT-to-dos). First, plan to get to the traditions and holiday activities the family can't live without. Then, based on the timing, leave room for 1-2 of the things the family wants to do this season.

2. Don't sweat the small stuff.

As mentioned before, bringing perfectionism into the holidays will only put more stress and pressure on you. The holidays are already so intense and chaotic, the more simple you keep them the more you will enjoy. Perfect decor, food, presents - the whole works - isn't always necessary. The holidays are more about creating memories, telling old family stories, and celebrating with those closest to us.

3. Remembering what the holidays are really about.

In the midst of holiday craziness, it can be easy to forget the true meaning of the holidays. It can feel like you're working over time trying to make the holiday special. We may spend hours looking for the best deal on gifts or days in the kitchen cooking all the holiday meals and treats. Some may even scramble to plan a last minute holiday trip for a much needed family reunion. All of the hustle and bustle, no matter how good or exciting, is stressful. Especially after last year's holidays, which were pretty uneventful. The exciting part of vaccines, boosters, and more knowledge is that we can travel, the world is more open, and we can FINALLY see some family!

Stopping to remember who you are doing all your "hard holiday work" for (family) can help lessen the stress. Remembering that the holidays tasks you've set for yourself (whether it be baking, gift shopping, or traveling) are something you WANT to do. The holidays are about enjoying the time you have with the people you are closest to. Everyone will be so excited to be back together that they will appreciate any and all of the things you are trying to do to make the holidays feel special.

## **Wrapping it up**

Stress happens when we let the holiday take us over. Trying to host the perfect holiday celebration and bring all of last year's missed activities to this year's fun is a large burden to carry. It is no surprise that there really wasn't much of a holiday last year, but it would be madness to think we could make up for all that missed fun in only one month. There are way too many light shows, performances, brunches, and winter activities to get to before January 1st. So, if you haven't done them yet, don't sweat it. What is most important now is to focus on the people around you and the holiday time you have left. Ditch the perfection and instead, savor the time you've made for your family and friends! It's the time that's important, not the tasks.