

12 Happy Holiday Tips

How to Really Enjoy the Season

by Dianne Bischoff James

Feelings of comfort and joy can seem elusive when the holiday to-do list looms or runs amok. The season can seem more like an endless burden than a parade of cheerful events and glad tidings. Amidst celebratory chaos, these simple rules will help restore inner peace and create greater happiness.

1 Eschew Perfection
Guests are much more interested in filling their stomachs with great food than judging the scuff marks and wall dings. The perfection of the season is found in the special moments when families and friends sit down together.

2 Pay Attention to the Smiles
The approaching holidays encourage more shared smiles, kind words and thoughtful gestures. While out and about, look for the grins and well wishes. Hold the door open for others and offer a friendly greeting to store clerks. We'll find ourselves smiling even more, because thoughtfulness is contagious.

3 Do Nothing for 15 Minutes
It's amazing how refreshed we feel when we take a few minutes to sit in a comfortable chair and simply experience a moment of stillness. Inner quiet allows the mind to relax and reinvest energy in the body, so we can return to holiday activities with renewed zest.

4 Give Each Person a Special Gift
Think of something thoughtful that both the giver and receiver enjoy doing together and write a promissory note for the shared experience, such as a free backrub, a day spent downtown, a personal manicure or a movie the other person wants to see.



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5 Take Advantage of Extended Shopping Hours
To avoid crowds and lines, schedule a late-night power-shopping trip. This is the easiest way to manage a department store visit with sanity, have easy access to the shelves and get immediate service.

6 Take a Holiday Binge Day
Designate a day with no limits and no self-judgment. For anyone that mentally monitors their calories or sweets, claim a binge day out loud with permission for total holiday munching freedom. The next day, we can reinstate discipline.

7 Sing While We Work
Nothing makes meal preparation tasks go faster than crooning along to our favorite carols. Turn up Susan Boyle's *O Holy Night* and soon your lungs will be full of air, your heart filled with sentiment, and the turkey stuffed with seasonal goodness will be ready to go into the oven.

8 Express Feelings in a Healthy Way
Family gatherings can sometimes

test our boundaries and patience. Avoid repressing feelings by finding a way to speak a personal truth in the moment, in a calm and healthy fashion. It's better than returning home stewing about what we wish we could or should have said.

9 Assign Roles to Household Helpers

The holiday load is lighter when everyone pitches in. Assign specific roles to household members with clear responsibilities, from taking out the garbage to setting the table and washing up.

10 Leave Some Tasks for Later
It's unrealistic to think the house has to be in perfect order after festive gatherings. After guests leave, put the leftovers in the fridge and watch a movie. Cleanup will feel easier and faster after a good night's rest.

11 Express Gratitude at the Table
Loving feelings can never be expressed enough, so use the holiday as an opportunity to tell others how important they are to you. Create a heartfelt moment at the table by sharing at least one thing that you're truly grateful for, and ask everyone else to do the same.

12 Go Outside for Fun in Nature
Hiking in a nearby forest preserve, skating, sledding or building a snow fort with the kids not only burns energy, but is emotionally exhilarating for the whole family. Pick an outdoor activity, don appropriate togs, and share in the laughter and serenity of a sparkling winter day.

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