

## 10 Strategies to Create Joyful Christmas

Does the thought of attending all those family and social gatherings that come with the Christmas holidays fill you with as much dread as with joyous anticipation? Whether visiting your own family or your in-laws, Christmas is a holiday that can trigger feelings of negative emotion.

You may be running between parents, in-laws, divorced in-laws as well as sharing time with your own children with your former spouse. Or, if your spouse is a physician, you may be spending part of Christmas alone.

It is finding the balance and focus within yourself that will determine how you get through the holiday season. Prioritizing your time and energy and developing a plan of action in alignment with your priorities is one of the best ways to allow yourself to experience a joyful Christmas. Try these 10 Strategies for decreasing stress and having a happy holiday.

- 1. PRIORITIZE.** When looking at a long list of invitations, Christmas gifts to buy, and things to do, prioritize both your time and your energy. Keep things simple whether it's in the gifts you're giving or the events you're attending. Begin by taking a moment to quietly reflect and ask yourself what's most important to you this Christmas.
- 2. JUST SAY "NO".** Remember the "Just Say 'No'" anti-drug campaign used in schools? It is possible to lovingly "just say no" to family and friends this holiday season. Trying to attend too many parties in a limited amount of time can be overwhelming. Again, prioritize your invitations by their importance to you and where you can give and receive the most joy.
- 3. SET BOUNDARIES.** Sometimes family gatherings can trigger negative emotions. Families have a way of falling back into old patterns of behavior whether those patterns are life sustaining or not. You may want to show up for your family or for your in-laws and still have feelings of anxiety and dread. Setting a boundary on the amount of time you will spend at each event may make it more comfortable for you.
- 4. HAVE AN ALLY.** Have an ally to support you whether it's by going shopping together or attending gatherings. This doesn't necessarily mean a date but someone whom you love and trust. You know who feeds into your negativity and who doesn't. Choose someone who is detached from any feelings you may experience and can be present in an unconditionally loving way.
- 5. MAINTAIN YOUR SPIRITUAL SPACE.** What is spiritual space? Extend your arms out to your sides. Now turn in a circle. Everything within the diameter of that circle is your spiritual space. That's the space you're responsible for keeping in alignment and at peace. The power centers within that space are your mind and your heart. No one can enter that space or disturb it without your permission.
- 6. ALCOHOL.** Alcohol is a social lubricant, often allowing you and others to interact more comfortably. Alcohol is also a depressant. It affects the functioning of various

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parts of the brain. It may free you from your inhibitions, making you feel more comfortable in social settings but it can also cause feelings of exaggerated emotion. If you, your friends or your family abuse alcohol during the Christmas season, it can ignite a whole inferno of exaggerated negative emotions within yourself and others. Staying sober or limiting your intake of alcohol will allow you to enjoy the moment as well as allow you to maintain your own inner balance.

**7. CAFFEINE & SUGAR.** Both caffeine and sugar are stimulants that can contribute to feelings of anxiety. They take your energy up fast and then they let you crash. If you're already feeling anxious and overwhelmed, caffeine & sugar will only contribute to those feelings; not to mention feelings of guilt if you're trying to watch your weight. Try some sparkling water with a twist of lime in it as a substitute.

**8. INTENTIONS.** Stating your intentions for the day and for each event is a powerful way to create the Christmas you want to have. Take time to center yourself, ask for guidance and state your intention each morning and before each event.

**9. EMPATHY.** "Empathy is the capacity to recognize or understand another's state of mind or emotion. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or in some way experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empathy>). Having empathy and compassion for those around you are the greatest gifts you can give.

**10. GRATITUDE.** Gratitude is the quickest way into alignment in any situation. Did you know you can't feel gratitude and negative emotion at the same time? Christmas is a good time to make a gratitude list and to express appreciation through your thought, word and deed.