

# The C&A Express

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## ***“Get Those Partridges out of my Pear Tree!”***

Not everybody feels the need to be in the “holiday spirit.” And even among those of us who look forward to this annual time of cheer and goodwill, the inescapable hustle and bustle of the season can occasionally become overwhelming.

### **How can you fully enjoy the holidays without feeling as crispy as a cookie that’s been in the oven a little too long?**

Here’s an activity that works best when you can get a few friends or relatives to join in. (It’s OK to do this on your own, too.)

1. First, make a list of **all the things** you expect to do for the holidays this year.
2. Put a star next to the things you actually **enjoy** doing.
3. Now check the activities that have to get done, but preferably by someone else.
4. Finally, put a minus sign next to the activities you enjoy the least, but that you simply must do yourself and can’t escape.

The next part is more fun: Make three lists. On one list, write down your **favorite holiday sights and sounds** – sleigh bells, snowflakes, etc. The second list should contain your favorite things to **eat and drink** during the holidays. Now list your favorite **aromas** – bayberry, pine, cinnamon, spiced cider, gingerbread, and so on.

Finally, write down what the holidays mean to you personally. **What exactly is it that you’re celebrating?** What gives special meaning to this time of year for you? What activities bring you peace and joy? You may find that you’ve listed things that are religious, family related or oriented toward volunteer work.

If you’ve done this with a friend, compare lists.

Did anything on your “love to do” list make it onto your friend’s “forget about it” list? **If so, think of a way to swap duties.** For example, you love to bake but hate to decorate. Your pal would rather hang lights and fuss with reindeer figurines than set foot in a kitchen. Maybe you can offer to bake cookies with her kids while she cheerily decks your halls with boughs of holly.

**You can also use the elements from your “enjoyable” list to reward yourself for doing those things that make you grit your teeth.** After a hard day of shopping at the mall with toddlers or teens, reward yourself by listening to your new holiday CD over a mug of hot cider. Light a bayberry scented candle. Reflect on those things that give meaning to the season while you watch leaves or snowflakes float lazily past your window.

**And be good to yourself!** Relax. Sometimes it’s nice to get away from the holiday madness entirely. Take a warm bath, go swimming or skiing, play with your pets. (If you find yourself forcing Kitty to wear fuzzy reindeer antlers, you may be a hopeless holiday addict.)

**You can also try something new.** Ask friends from different cultural or religious backgrounds what they do to celebrate. Visit your local museum’s new seasonal display, and bring along a relative or friend who doesn’t get out much.

One final note: Many people choose not to celebrate “standard” holidays at all, sometimes for religious reasons. Others associate the season with arguments, a loved one’s death, or financial worries. Be kind, help when you can, but **sometimes you just have to let go.**

And if you or a family member could use some extra support right now, help is always available.

**Just call your EAP at (800) 742-2858.**

**Happy Holidays!**