

The C&A Express

Volume 2

The Holidays Are Here, But You've... Lost Your Ho Ho Ho?

You're not alone. **The holiday season isn't merry for everyone.** In fact, for many people, the holiday season can seem like an overwhelming chore. Mental health experts agree that they often see a sharp increase in people feeling depressed this time of year.

What is this all about?

- Sometimes it's about the increased **expectations** of creating the perfect holiday experience.
- Sometimes it's about the **family issues** that tend to resurface around the holidays.
- And sometimes the **memories** of a difficult holiday past cloud our ability to enjoy the present.

Taking Inventory of Your Holiday Traps...

The mental image of a **perfect holiday season** creates some traps that we need to learn to avoid. Traps like:

Sacrificing all enjoyment of the **here and now** in order to get everything ready.

Insisting upon a **perfectly executed extravaganza**, with you as the director.

Orchestrating others' celebrations whether they want it or not. Taking responsibility for making the holidays perfect for **someone else**.

Buying into the **togetherness myth** and insisting on wall to wall people day after day.

Allowing **media** to influence your expectations.

Believing there are **right ways** to behave and feel.

Turning the holidays into a **competitive event**, which you must win by giving the best gifts, parties, baked goods, etc.

Making **unrealistic commitments** to reinvent yourself during the new year.

Twelve Ways to Put the Twelve Days Back into Your Holiday Season...

1. Give yourself the gift of deciding what's **most meaningful** to your family each holiday season.
2. Focus on the **here and now**. Don't miss the joy of the moment by wasting time worrying about the holidays or regretting the past.
3. Let go of any **unrealistic expectations** of the perfect celebration. It probably doesn't exist!
4. Don't try to fix **relationship problems**. The holidays are probably the worst time to attempt to mend damaged relationships. Instead practice accepting your families and friends for who they are rather than what you want them to be.
5. It's not your responsibility to try and fix other people's feelings. **Focus on what brings you joy**, and let your friends and relatives do the same.
6. Make **reasonable commitments** to others that you can follow through on rather than promising more than you have time to offer.
7. **Take a risk** and break a few of the old traditions that have no meaning for you. What seems right for you and your family right now?
8. Set **financial limits** on gift giving.
9. Better yet, give **the gift of your time**. There is no better gift you can give to people you care about than your undivided attention.
10. Give yourself and the people you care about **personal space**. Accept that the holidays aren't a happy time for everyone and don't need to be.
11. Decide what the holiday season really means for you. Not everyone else in your family, but for you and **only you**.
12. Rather than trying to reinvent yourself each year, focus on what you've **accomplished** at year's end. New Year's is a great time to pat yourself on the back for all of the past year's accomplishments.

**Still having a hard time with the holidays?
Talk it over with an EAP counselor
at 800-742-2858.**