

The North Carolina Journal for Women

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10 Steps to Reduce Stress and Really ENJOY This Holiday Season



It's that time of year again: a busy and eventful holiday season. Get a jumpstart now to get prepared and organized. Following these 10 steps will help make your holiday season more enjoyable and relaxing.

1. Plan and Make Lists.

You can then use these lists as your guide for the rest of the season (and as a basis for next year). **Create a Holiday Planner binder to hold your lists.** Some examples include

- Gifts to be given, amount to spend (include family, friends, school, church, etc)
- **Christmas card list (computerize it!)**
- Visits to make

- **Menus for parties/entertaining**

- Wrapping supplies (e.g., tape, wrapping paper, gift cards, ribbon, tissue paper, boxes and other items)

2. Decide what you want your holidays to mean and stay true to your feelings.

Capture the real meaning of the holidays to get true joy during this time in spite of stress. Ask yourself these questions:

- **How much emphasis do our activities place on the spiritual side of Christmas?**
- How involved is my family in the Christmas preparation?
- **What activities are particularly important to our family during the holidays? To myself?**
- What would my ideal Christmas be like?

3. Create Holiday Traditions.

Promote a few fun family activities to the status of tradition. **How do you create a tradition? Simple: you do it every year and you ALL enjoy it together.**

Keep things simple. There's no need to spend money to create a cherished tradition. **Drive out to see the lights in the most decorated neighborhood in town. Volunteer as a family at the Food Bank.** Prepare holiday cards and wrap gifts together.

4. Buy and Give Consumable Gifts.

Think consumable to fight clutter, to save money, and to bring the holiday spirit back home. **Ask for consumable gifts from others like a massage, or for a donation to be made to a good cause in your name.** You won't have to find a place to put that after the holidays!

5. Establish a Gift Savings Stash.

Contact your bank about special holiday savings accounts. Plan to put aside a small amount each month to use for gifts and promise yourself not to spend more than you have in your account. Stick with your budget to avoid debt.

6. Beware the Temptation to Be PERFECT.

The beautiful greeting card and televisions images are not REAL LIFE. **Do not be seduced into comparing your home, family and circumstances with the touched-up image of the small screen.**

7. Keep It Simple.

When you wrap, stick with solid colors. Solid red or white can be used throughout the year with different-colored ribbons. Or use nicely printed gift boxes that come in multi-packs for a dollar. Whatever you decide for wrapping, keep all of your holiday wrapping and supplies organized together in a durable container. **When you're done, store the container away until next season. Wrapping couldn't be easier!**

8. Consider Time, Not Just Money.

Make sure your planned projects are both inexpensive and quick to produce. **You'll have to get over the idea of hand-embroidered ornaments, hand decorated cookies or elaborate multi-step fruitcakes.**

9. Think In Multiples.

See a great gift? Buy several. Sending a magazine subscription to someone? **Consider who else might like it. Use your list when you go through catalogs so you can knock several recipients out at once.**

10. Presentation Is Everything.

This does not mean investing a fortune in overpriced holiday packaging. **But giving simple drop cookies presented in a red paper covered candy box makes a beautiful presentation rather than thrown in a plastic bag, and it is still inexpensive and simple.** Decorate a bottle of wine with nice ribbon or wrap the bottle in clear cellophane wrap or tissue paper and tie it up with ribbon if you don't have any wine bags handy.

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