

Pre Holiday Syndrome

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If you're getting stressed out about the holidays weeks and even months before they arrive, you could be suffering from Pre Holiday Syndrome. This is where you're expectations are influenced by other's, especially the media, on what your holiday should be like. Well, the media doesn't live in your home. They don't know the personalities of your family members nor do they know your financial situation. Don't measure your expectations against their unrealistic ones.

Below are questions to help you identify if you have Pre Holiday Syndrome. Then I list symptoms and cures. After that I give you ten time wasters and tips on how to change them. Most of these tips are thought provoking because the sooner you realize your expectations are unrealistic the sooner you can change your thinking and your actions. These changes will help you enjoy your holidays more because you will be celebrating them on your own terms, not some media's ideal.

Test Questions

1. Do you think your holidays/Christmas this year will be absolutely wonderful?
2. Do you have more than three holiday shopping list in your purse or pocket?
3. Do you usually mail off your gift packages too late to arrive by Christmas?
4. Do you feel that no matter how much you spend on presents you won't have given enough?
5. Do you usually get sick or injured at holiday time?
6. Do you ever feel like giving up the holidays altogether?

Symptoms

1. Television and other media influence holiday dreams.
 - a. Ideal Picture
 1. Blissful, happy families
 2. Neat, cheerful, and perfectly decorated homes.
 3. Time honored rituals.
 - b. Reality
 1. Rarely is everyone completely happy at the same time.

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2. With a change of routines it's hard to keep the house looking perfect.
 3. Times change, people change. Sometimes rituals are outdated.
- c. THE CURE: Lower your expectations on what you think your holiday should 'look' like to others. Focus on spending time with family and friends instead of spending time on trying to make the "perfect" Christmas. Be thankful for whatever happy moments do occur.
2. Too much to do.
 - a. Lists upon lists upon lists.
 - b. THE CURE: lighten the load.
 1. Make one grand list of everything then cross out half.
 3. Pocketbook panic.
 - a. Not making a budget or sticking with the one you made.
 - b. Charging everything and not keeping track.
 - c. THE CURE:
 1. Realize what is happening.
 - a. Children – explain budget (if old enough) and plan requests for gifts/toys accordingly.
 - b. Friends and/or some family – agree to cut out gift giving or put a spending limit.
 - c. Draw names to limit the total number of people you have to buy gifts for.
 4. Illness and Exhaustion.
 - a. Causes:
 1. Doing too much by yourself.
 2. Feeling guilty that whatever you do isn't enough.
 3. Feeling angry about the pressure to be happy on cue.
 4. Staying up late or getting up early to get things done.
 5. Filling our regular times set aside for rest and leisure activities with stressful holiday activities that are suppose to be fun, but aren't.
 - b. THE CURE:
 1. Realize pressures may distract us from normal routines of healthful eating, exercise, rest, relaxation, and sleep. Try to balance it.
 2. Think in small time periods; instead of; "in January I'll get myself back together", say; "tomorrow I'll get my self back together."

3. It's okay to enjoy the times when nothing is happening. Don't over commit or overscheduled.

5. Missing the point.

- a. THE CURE: get a better perspective on the real meaning of the holidays. It's not about having the best decorated house in the neighborhood or giving the most gifts. Think about what is really important to your family, your religion, your community.

Ten Time Wasters

1. Things: It isn't what we have that makes us happy. It is what we enjoy that makes us happy.
2. Not saying no: Never make a decision on the spur of the moment. Say; "I'll have to think about it and call you back." This puts you in control.
3. Unmade decisions: Narrow your choices to help solve a problem.
4. Not interrupting: Learn to interrupt without being rude. Just say "excuse me, but I really must go."
5. Television: Choose carefully, giving thought to how you might spend the time in a more rewarding way.
6. Lack of planning: Better and more realistic planning saves time and aggravation. Written plans make it easier to stay on track.
7. Clutter: It takes a lot of time to find what you need or want when you have to dig through clutter. A place for everything and everything in its place.
8. Ignoring maintenance: Fix things now when the problem is small. It's not going to fix itself.
9. Idle waiting: Carry a pen, stamps, address book, greeting cards, and paper for lists or notes. Write out your schedule for tomorrow or address greeting cards.
10. Agonizing about the future: Plan for the future but be flexible. Enjoy each day and always look for the silver lining. It's there for you to find.

Have a happy and peaceful holiday!