



Staying Sane Through the Holidays

By: Gretchen Reid

December 2007

Published in the Highlander Monthly

Is it possible to stay sane and even better, experience a sense of balance during the holidays? Yes - if you take deep breaths often and keep everything in perspective. What are the holidays about anyway? Giving thanks and sharing love. If you can keep those as your guiding lights through these months, life will be a breeze.

Anytime you wander from the guiding lights of Thanks and Love, just take a deep breath, bring those words to mind and watch the magic unfold. The world around you is a direct reflection of the world inside you. If there is chaos, look inside. If there is conflict, look inside. If there is joy, look inside. If there is balance and ease, look inside.

I have proven this over and over again in my own life. Just the other morning I lay in bed. My husband and children are down stairs playing joyfully. As I get my day going, I allow a stressful subject to overcome my thoughts. The ick, oozes from my every pore. Suddenly, the kids are crying, there is fighting, my husband is uptight. "You know, you're creating this. It's time to shift." Breathe. Trust. Love. New perspective – today is Sunday, a day to play together as a family. Suddenly, it's quiet, niceness all around. We go on a bike ride in the mountains and enjoy the entire day together.

This technique is not just reserved for the holidays. It is an every day tool that is quick at hand. It costs nothing. It's never misplaced. It's lighter than a feather. And it works every time!

Logistics can drive me crazy if I allow them too. Scheduling of where and what and when and who. When ever I find myself stressed over logistics, I now simply breathe and say the word "trust" to myself. Almost immediately the solution falls in my lap. The questions are magically answered and everything works out just perfectly. This happened just the other day. My husband is traveling for work between the holidays. It just so happens to be a critical work week for myself as well. I needed before and after school

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105

care for my children and didn't know how it was going to materialize. I realized my stress level was rising. I took a deep breathe, whispered the word "trust", and felt a deep knowingness that it would all work out somehow. I released the need to figure it all out on my own. Within hours two friends stepped into the picture and offered more than I even imagined, making it all possible. I now sit with ease and appreciation for the support we have in our lives.

With holidays comes a massive amount of logistics. With friend and family gatherings, gift giving, food preparation, it never ends. Imagine the ideal end result, feel it deep in your body, breathe into it, and allow things to fall into place as they will. Let go of the control and the perfectionism. Again, Thanks and Love! That's what it's all about. Show your appreciation for all that you have, and share your love with all those you touch. It's simple, it's powerful, and it's real.

For some more simple, powerful, real tips for the holiday season, read below. These tips were provided by real moms for real moms. Take them for what they are and see what works for you and your family.

Tip 1: Lower your standards. Things don't need to be perfect and rarely are even when we try our best. Instead of aiming for the perfect decorations/gifts/meals/etc., aim for getting it done sufficiently without killing yourself. For example, instead of making an entire fancy meal from scratch, make one or two dishes that you love or want to try, and keep the rest simple or purchased.

Tip 2: Reconsider making gifts from scratch. They will be more time consuming and costly than you think.

Tip 3: Come up with some family traditions. They don't have to be fancy, and they don't have to be from your youth, but it's nice to have special things your family looks forward to doing each year. Some of our family traditions include cutting our own tree, baking & decorating sugar cookies on Christmas Eve, going to see "Wild Lights" at the zoo one night, and everyone receiving a new Christmas tree ornament in their stocking.

Tip 4: If the adults in the family still all exchange gifts, it might be time to consider a gift swap or skipping it all together. If you choose the swap, each adult draws a name and gives a gift to just one other adult. You can set a price range. On the gift tags, you can just put the name of the recipient and see if they can guess the giver. This saves time, stress, and money while keeping the spirit alive!

Tip 5: Manage your time well and keep the most important things in the forefront. If you spend 30 hours doing something that is not filling your soul or any particular need, it's less time to do the many things that create special memories such as sledding, singing Christmas carols, and playing with friends. If you're having trouble prioritizing, think about what might make you or your family happiest and choose that when possible.

Motherhood Transitions

Tip 6: Do some of your shopping on-line or via catalogs. It takes the stress out of schlepping from store to store. Just give yourself enough time for things to be shipped to you, and for you to ship them to others, if necessary. Your best bet is to use catalogs and websites you're familiar with or big names so that you can be confident in the quality of the merchandise.

Tip 7: Make Christmas Eve simple. Make a spread of appetizers and Christmas cookies. This easy no fuss meal leaves time to get yourself and your family ready for Church or other outings without too much stress.

Tip 8: Get all your gift shopping done by the end of Thanksgiving weekend. This helps avoid the chaos of the malls during December and with so many relatives living out of state, it provides plenty of time to ship everything out.

Tip 9: Keep things simple for your gift exchange with your spouse. Buy each other a stocking stuffer of a CD or DVD or something small and set a limit on gifts or buy something for both of you. One woman says last year they got a camcorder, and this year they're getting a dishwasher. What about two tickets to the Bahamas?

Tip 10: Don't over commit and make your schedule too full. Take on only what you can handle and delay or omit any additional tasks. Only deal with the "must do" items.

Tip 11: With out of state families, agree to buy an extra item for your own kids. Wrap it and label it from the family out of town. That way your kids get what you know they would like, you spend what you want to spend and you save on shipping expense and hassle. Have them do the same at their end.

Tip 12: Send holiday cards on a different holiday, such as Thanksgiving, New Years, or Valentine's Day. It's very relieving to not worry about them on Dec. 20th!

Tip 13: Don't go nuts cleaning your house for a big party, clean it when the party is over. It will give you a greater feeling of accomplishment and you get to enjoy the clean house for longer. Either that or hire a maid!

Tip 14: Pretend that you are going on a 3 week cruise on the 1st of December, so everything has to be done by then. Or – really do go on vacation for those of you who would rather just escape it all.

Tip 15: Check in on your 'obligations'. If something is feeling like an obligation, usually coupled with a feeling of heaviness or the word 'should', test it. Do you really HAVE to do it, or do you just THINK you have to do it. Do only what you truly HAVE to do and what you WANT to do. Duck out gracefully from the SHOULD'S. Others will understand and perhaps even be relieved themselves.

Tip 16: Focus on giving to others. It helps keep your perspective.

Motherhood Transitions

Tip 17: Have kids help put together homemade gifts. They don't have to be big. For example, opaque Nalgene bottles (plastics don't leach out of certain types) with sunscreen, lip balm, BoraBora Bars, and home roasted almonds. Allow the kids help come up with items to go with the theme. Plan for this earlier on in the year so it's not a rush in November/December. Or follow Tip #2.

Tip 18: Ride around and look at lights. Or just stay home.

Tip 19: Do something for yourself in bits throughout the holiday season such as a manicure, massage, bubble bath, bike ride, run, hike, party with friends; what ever works for you.

Tip 20: Life is not perfect, don't expect it to be. Take the pressure off yourself during the Holidays; it's not about perfection and landing expectations. Do a few little things that are important to you and your family and don't sweat the rest.

Enjoy the holidays in balance!

UPCOMING GROUP COACHING

Would you like to more effortlessly manage multiple demands, balance family and career, make attuned choices for you and your family, move forward on your dreams and desires, and develop a sense of inner peace in your life...all while enjoying the company and support of other moms?

Gretchen will be starting 2 coaching groups – one in December and one in January. The groups will consist of 5-6 women and will run in three-month cycles. See www.motherhoodtransitions.com or call Gretchen at (303) 642-3105 for more information about group coaching and how it works.

Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 – Entrepreneurial Moms

December 6, 20

January 3, 24

February 7, 21

Fridays, 3:30-5:00 – A Fabulous Mix of Moms

2nd and 4th Friday of each month starting January, 2008

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105