

From the Health Clinic



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BE JOYFUL AS YOU CELEBRATE THIS SEASON OF JOY!

Prioritize and delegate

[The holidays](#) are right around the corner are you having fun yet? Many are striving for the Currier and Ives Christmas of their childhood, but in reality they are dreading the holidays. How can you beat back the dread and have the family holiday of your dreams? Start by lowering your expectations. Be more realistic about what you can do. This usually involves changing the tradition it can be equally as good, but it has to be unique to your family. The following tips can help:

1. Reassess and Prioritize

[Holiday stress](#) sets in when you try to do it all. Stress is an emotional reaction to circumstances that you feel are out of control. To cope, take some time out, rethink what is stressing you out, and look for alternatives. Change your demands to preferences: Tell yourself, "If I have time, I'll do this and that. If not, I'll only do that."

2. Delegate!

Does the house need cleaning or decorating? Let each family member be responsible for a room. Create a "job jar." Everybody takes a turn [choosing what his or her job](#) will be.

Jobs can be color-coded according to age. When you delegate, you have to make your expectations clear to your children, and you may have to lower your standards a little bit.

Hold firm and be realistic

3. Don't Give in to the "Gimmies"

"I want, I want!" This familiar phrase can wear parents down over the holidays, but giving in to your child's every request can cause [financial distress](#). It is okay to tell your child that a gift is too expensive. Even Santa Claus has limited funds.

Another way to fight the [commercialism](#) of the holidays is to beef up on the traditions that do not cost any extra money. Bake cookies, go caroling, give to needy families, or volunteer. Explain to your children that there are a lot of families who do not have as much as they do. To get children into the spirit of giving, ask them to pick a few of their old toys to donate to the less fortunate.

4. Be Realistic about Relatives

When the [in-laws visit](#) this season, have realistic expectations for the short term. Do not try to solve past issues with family members over the holidays. It is not the time to bring up every little irritation. Use discretion. And if going to a certain relative's house every year causes a lot of holiday stress, decide if you really need to do it. Maybe you can go every other year instead.

[Be flexible while setting limits](#)

5. Flexibility Can Buy You Time

How can you get anything done when the little ones are home on vacation and you only have a few days off? Parents take turns looking after children with neighbors or colleagues. You might hire a babysitter to take the children to the movies or to play with them for a few hours while you are working around the house.

6. Set Limits for College Children

A college student home for the holidays can wreak havoc on family routines. For months now, your teen has been on his own and doing things very differently. You will need to set some ground rules in advance. Everyone is going to have to compromise during the visit. So it is important that parents and children be respectful of each other.

Parents should take it easy on themselves over the holidays. This time of year, people are so concerned by what others might say about them if they do not do everything perfectly. Ask yourself what imperfection really means. Surprise! You are human like everyone else.

7. Take Time to Pray and Worship as a Family

Light the Advent candle as a family. Attend Christmas Mass together. Sing Christmas Carols with your children. *Give Glory to the Newborn King* as you celebrate the joys and blessings of Christmas with your children!