

Enjoy the HOLIDAYS

The holidays should be a time of relaxation and enjoyment of family & friends. Start new traditions to reduce stress and make this holiday season the best ever!

Gift-Giving

Perhaps the most stressful part of the holiday season is gift-giving. Shopping can be both difficult and tiring. You may be anxious about getting the "right" gift for every person you list. And of course, the expense incurred can cause additional stress and worry. Here are few ways to simplify this aspect of the holidays -

Give Experiences. Instead of standard gifts, buy gifts that will help create memories. For example, consider buying theatre tickets, cooking lessons, spa certificates or even a three course gourmet dinner. Many people would love to receive these, but would not buy them for themselves. Browse through your local discount sites like *Groupon*, *WagJag*, or *Living Social*, to get some ideas and find great deals. Many of these sites allow you to buy these deals as gifts and have no expiry dates!

Gift Cards. Instead of cash, consider giving gift cards -

- They are easy to get. Most pharmacies or convenience stores sell them for a variety of different venues. Alternately, you can get them online and avoid the shops all together!
- They take the guesswork out of gift-giving. The recipient can buy exactly what they want, and maximize your gift by buying during sales.
- They are especially appreciated by teenagers, as shopping is a social event for them.
- They are helpful for those on a fixed budget as the card can be used as needed.
- They are useful as cash, but show that you put some thought into the gift.

You can also put a gift card into a box and wrap as you would any other present!



This year, give the Earth a present by not using regular wrapping paper. Although pretty to look at, it is unrecyclable and ends up in our landfills. Instead, use plain recyclable paper, gift bags, or reusable cloth bags.

Family



The holidays can be very stressful for some families. Some people try to mend relationships. But the holidays are not the right time. Often due to the pressure of the holidays, the original problem may be blown out of proportion. When tension escalates, it can spread to other family members, who may feel obligated to take sides. Be realistic and accept that your family will not change just because it is the holiday season. Instead, think ahead and come up with a plan that will ensure lower stress levels for everyone-

- **Avoid situations that cause conflict.** For example, if deciding who hosts the family dinner causes tension, suggest an alternative like going to a restaurant, or hiring a caterer.
- **Limit your time.** Tell your host right away that you have other obligations that will necessitate an earlier departure.
- **Call a truce.** Contact the family member you are having an issue with and offer a truce for the season. Schedule a time in January to seriously discuss the problem.
- **Limit your alcoholic intake.** Drinking too much can lead to regrettable behaviours.
- **Be ready to walk away.** If a particular member of the family is upsetting you, busy yourself with a task, like cleaning up or helping prepare the food.
- **Bite your tongue.** If someone says something that is upsetting, remember that you are not alone in the room and your reply may upset others.



Charity



The best way to bring joy in your life is by helping others. This holiday season, give to the less fortunate. There is no better way to put aside your holiday worries than to help those that need it.

- **Volunteer your time or skills.** Help at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, community centre, or church. Alternately, you can help with fundraising campaigns for charitable organizations.
- **Donate money or gifts to needy families.**
- **Give away your old electronics to those that can use them.** The holiday season often means getting a new updated gizmo. Be sure to give away your old models which probably still have lots of life left. <http://www.charitablerecycling.ca/CA/home.asp>
- **Support businesses and stores that give to local charities.** And be sure to participate in their charitable drives.
- **Encourage your workplace to get involved.** Suggest a clothing or food drive.



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