

# Keeping In Touch

October 2008

The Village Employee Assistance Program

## Reclaiming the Holidays

Think about reclaiming the holidays this season. Cancel your usual holiday stress. Tear up the long shopping lists of things the television commercials have convinced your children they must have to feel good about themselves.

Instead, create traditions that feed the soul, traditions that teach children to be more loving and caring. As parents, reclaim your right and duty to teach your children the invaluable human lessons holidays can provide. This holiday season, shed your anxieties and fears about being perfect gift-giving parents and give your children the gift of truly meaningful holiday traditions.

### I want

The most frequently uttered words by children before the holidays are I WANT. Kids are taught to want a lot, and to be disappointed and even angry with parents if they aren't satisfied. We've come to believe that our children's holiday joy, and our feelings about being good parents can be bought. How about ringing up a big NO SALE on that belief this time around!

### Whajaget?

The one word query most asked by children after the holidays is WHAJAGET?—referring, of course, to the number and value of the gifts received. And we have been conned into believing that good parents grant their children's wishes. We've allowed Madison Avenue to train our children to be greedy, unpaid holiday marketing representatives!

Children learn similar "holiday-like" lessons throughout the year. How often does a three year-old's unrelenting screams for supermarket candy result in a treat in exchange for silence? Is this a healthy power you want to give your children? What's the lesson learned?

### Thanksgiving = 30 shopping days 'til Christmas

Make Thanksgiving about more than gluttony, football, and fear-producing warnings that there are fewer than THIRTY SHOPPING DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS!!! The Pilgrim's first Thanksgiving honored friendship, courage, compassion, and faith. It was literally a celebration of life, because half of their number had died during that first terrible winter. The Pilgrims celebrated and were thankful for their good fortune. Isn't this a tradition worth reclaiming?



### Treasured moments

What were your warmest holiday memories as a child? What made them special? For most of us, those memories bring more smiling faces of loved ones than pictures of gifts, more sounds of caring words than sounds of tearing wrapping paper. Let your memories carry you back to loving hearts and giving souls. And talk to your children about those times, they really do want to know.

**Take back the holidays! You never really gave them away.**

*-Family Education Network*

## Counselor Column



**Steve Saum**

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The Village Family Service Center

**Q:** *I'm recently divorced and it's the first holiday in years I won't be spending with my in-laws. I was really close to them. How do I adjust?*

**A:** Coping with the change in holiday routine is a common, but often unexpected, result of divorce. If you were close to your in-laws, it is appropriate to send a card and wish them well, even though you won't be spending time with them.

To help with the adjustment, make plans so you don't spend the holidays alone. Invite friends over, or make plans to get together with others who might be otherwise alone. Plan a potluck this year, and assign each person a dish to make. Having a gift exchange can also be a way to maintain a sense of holiday tradition. Remember that it is a time of change, and you are trying new ideas that may become holiday traditions.

It is important to continue with holiday traditions, but you can simplify them. You can spend less time and money and still give meaningful gifts during the holiday season. Put up fewer decorations, spend less on gifts,

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# How to Prevent Holiday Weight Gain

The Holiday season, for most, is an exciting time of year full of celebrations. Unfortunately, most of the festivities include traditional foods and seasonal treats, most of them rich in fat and calories. It is no wonder we put on weight at this time of year and start the new year on a diet.

How can we avoid the weight gain without feeling deprived and miserable? Though it may seem impossible to avoid all those rich and delicious foods, there are ways you can share in the fun without increasing your waistline.

The secret is ALL THINGS IN MODERATION. When you use this approach to all things during the holiday season, including what you eat and what activities you participate in, you can avoid the extra weight while still enjoying the festivities in a healthier fashion.

Try the following tips to avoid weight gain and extra stress:

- **Drink lots of water.** This will flush the toxins out of your body and help decrease your appetite.
- **Never skip meals.** If you are planning a large meal late in the day, make sure you eat your regular meals during the day. Otherwise, you will be ravenous and eat way too much.
- **Stick to your regular routine.** Try to get enough sleep and regular exercise. This will help keep your stress level under control. Too much stress can cause too much eating. If you do not have time for your usual fitness routine, adjust according to your schedule. Ten minutes of exercise is better than none!
- **Stash healthy snacks in your desk.** If your office is deluged with treats from co-workers during holiday time who want to share their goodies, practice restraint. If you eat a healthy breakfast and lunch you will not feel so hungry and you will be less likely to overindulge between meals. If you do decide to try some of those tasty treats, remember to do so in moderation. Never stuff yourself. You will only feel miserable and probably disgusted with yourself afterward.
- **Never save up your calories.** Do not starve yourself all day trying to save up your calories for an evening event. By the time the party starts, you will be famished and will eat everything in sight! If you are planning to attend a holiday festivity in the evening, make sure you eat your regular meals during the day, including a healthy snack right before the party. You will be less tempted to eat too much.
- **Eat your veggies.** If you are at a party where there are lots of hors d'oeuvres, check out the healthy food options before you start digging in. Your best options are raw vegetables, fruit, chicken, or whole grain crackers. After you have indulged yourself on the healthy snacks, you can then move on to the more yummy options. You will not be so tempted to overdo and you will not feel deprived. In the same vein, if you are taking food to a holiday party, take something that is healthy. If you are hosting a party, make sure there are plenty of healthy low calorie snacks and water available for your guests.
- **Do not stay near the food.** Stay away from the kitchen and the buffet table as you may find yourself unconsciously stuffing food into your mouth. Holiday festivities are all about socializing with family and friends, so spend your time doing that and you will be far less tempted to eat.
- **Do not waste calories on alcohol.** An alcoholic drink can contain up to 250 calories per glass. This can easily add up to a full meal's worth of calories in a short time. If you must indulge, try limiting yourself to one drink or try mixing your drinks with water or diet soda. This will cut those calories down considerably.

These suggestions should help you keep your weight gain down and reduce your stress level while still enjoying the season's festivities.

**Remember, the secret to having a successful holiday experience is to keep everything in moderation.**



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make homemade gifts, or bake fewer cookies. Enjoy the season and take care of yourself and your health. Divorce can cause a great deal of physical and emotional stress. Facing the holidays can be extremely stressful even under normal circumstances. Get rest when you are tired, try to eat a balanced diet, and get regular exercise.

Take time to appreciate what you do have in your life. Although you are adjusting to a loss of relationships, it can be beneficial to remind yourself of those things and those relationships for which you are grateful. It can also be a time to remember what the season is all about. Consider volunteering as a way to practice gratitude. You can serve meals at the homeless shelter, visit a nursing home, or give gifts to those in need or those who cannot afford to buy gifts. Helping others can take your mind off your own worries.

Although you may be facing many changes with the coming holiday season, it can still be an enjoyable time. Take care of yourself and do only what you are capable of doing. Have reasonable expectations of yourself and others, make plans you can manage, and appreciate what you do have in order to have an enjoyable, relatively stress-free holiday season.

*Article Source: Chris Chenoweth,*

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