

## 'Tis the Season

"I can't believe it's already here! I have so much to do! How will I ever get it all done?!?"

Misty was coming off of an especially hectic time at work and hadn't had the bandwidth to plan ahead for the holidays. Now the holiday season was ramping up, and she was completely unprepared.

Many women carry the responsibility for making the holidays special for their families, but this can sometimes lead to stress, resentment, and fatigue as we try to make the holidays special for everyone.

To help Misty manage the stress, I suggested she focus on 5 tasks:

- **Prioritize** – What are the key events or holiday touches that most meaningful to you and your family? There are many ways to celebrate special times, so think about which ones make it most possible for you and your loved ones to connect.
- **Make a budget** – What can you reasonably make happen given the resources available, money and time especially? Make a clear budget of how much money is available to spend and how much time you are willing to commit and stick to it.
- **Ask for help** – Everyone can pitch in to make the season bright, even if that's not how it usually works. Actively participating can make the holidays more special for everyone. And if it all gets to be too much, or if you know this is a hard time of year for you, reach out for someone to talk to.
- **Manage togetherness** – The holidays can be full of expectations for idyllic family gatherings, but this is rarely the case in real life. Relationships can be warm, affirming, and fulfilling, but they can also be messy, tense, and conflictual, even in the same relationship. Make time to be together but be realistic about how much togetherness works best for you. Also, consider whether you want to always be with a large group, or if it makes sense to work in some smaller gatherings.
- **Take care of yourself** – Make space to get enough sleep and don't stray too far from your healthy eating habits. Also, find ways to get some exercise and be willing to take a breather. We can't enjoy the holidays and our loved ones if we don't take care of ourselves first.

It took some work for Misty to relieve herself of the expectation of celebrating the holidays as fully as she usually did. But once she could consider alternatives, she had lots of ideas and was able to get help with both the planning and the execution. Her family even ended up creating a whole new tradition that they wouldn't have thought of otherwise.

So, how are you creating space for yourself this season?