

Hectic Holidays

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“I hate the holidays,” she declared flatly. She said she enjoyed the fall and helping out with the school Halloween celebrations, but after that, she dreaded the rest of the year. Once November began, she generally felt harried, stressed out, and exhausted. It seemed impossible to meet all the expectations of her extended families, and she often didn’t get to do the things that helped her feel connected to the holidays. Many of us find ourselves overextended during the holidays.

As women, we are often the ones in charge of our family celebrations, and many of us turn ourselves inside out to make them special for those around us. However, we may be neglecting those things that make them special for us.

Here are some things to think about during this festive season:

Me first. Think about what traditions or activities are important to you, independent of what anyone else wants or expects. Prioritize these, so you are clear about which ones are most important for you.

Be realistic. Think ahead about what events or activities are the highest priority for you (and your family), and see if there is anything you can skip or simplify this year.

Make a plan. Make sure all of the important events are on the calendar, and think ahead about what your responsibilities are willing to take on for each event. It may also help to note when you need to begin preparing for each of these.

Ask for help. I have often found that family members who aren’t usually involved with holiday preparation find that these activities help them feel more connected to holidays and each other. Even if everyone is busy, if many people do part of the work, it is easier on everyone.

Let them help. This seems obvious, but many of us have such specific ideas about how the holidays should be, that we often have trouble letting others help. Consider what specific details you can let go. Think about whether it is more important for the holidays to be exactly how you envision them, or for others to help create them. Shared effort helps create richer shared memories.

The holidays can be a busy time, but they can be organized so that people feel more connected and close to family and friends. And that is what the holidays are supposed to be about!