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## Christmas Expectations

By Teresa Hansen

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Christmas is here again. It is a time of year we all look forward to with excitement and anticipation. But it can be a time of year when you feel overwhelmed, stressed, even depressed. So what makes the difference between enjoying the holidays and having a nervous breakdown?

First of all, we all have certain definitions and expectations of what Christmas is. Of course the most basic reason and definition of "Christ"mas is that we celebrate the birth of Christ. (A fact that is far too often overlooked which we will talk more about in a moment.) Review the following list of typical Christmas events and chores and consider in these areas what your expectations for the season, and of yourself.

- Making up a gift list
- Shopping for those gifts
- Making, wrapping, mailing gifts
- Making cards
- Writing cards
- Holiday baking
- Getting and decorating the tree
- Decorating the house
- Putting up Christmas lights
- Helping with school activities
- Helping with church activities
- Volunteer or charity work
- Traditional holiday events (concerts, plays, festivals)
- Special holiday cleaning
- Preparing for houseguests
- Preparing company meals
- Hosting parties
- Planning family gatherings
- Preparing for holiday travel

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Now that you've mentally determined your expectations, what are your resources?

How much time do you have available for these extra activities?

Do you work full-time or part-time outside your home?

What everyday commitments do you already have?

Are there other people in your family to whom these things are important and who would be willing to help?

That last sentence is really an important one to analyze.

Dilemma: You have an expectation that Christmas just isn't Christmas without having hundreds of lights gracing the outside of your home, trees and bushes. But you have so many other to-do lists that you expect your spouse to take care of the lights—(after all, your father always took care of that when

you were growing up.) Your husband never grew up with lights on the exterior of the house and it just isn't that important to him.

Solution: You either need to:

1. Lower your expectation of how the exterior of your house will be decorated
2. Convey to your husband how important that is to you and lovingly ask if he would be willing to help you (realizing that you don't want to manipulate or hold a grudge if he doesn't agree to meet your expectations).
3. Compromise ("Honey, could you please just do one string of lights around the front roofline of the house?")
4. Do it yourself.
5. Go without lights.

Throughout this whole exercise, realize that the whole purpose of putting up lights on the outside of your house is to celebrate the festivities, enrich your family's enjoyment, and celebrate the love of the season. If your expectations of putting up Christmas lights detract from that, then it may not be worth doing.

A tradition I grew up with is that every year my parents wrote a family Christmas letter summarizing the events of the year. Often this was the only yearly contact they had with old friends. What a wonderful tradition!

However, several years the season got a little too busy. Other events and commitments took priority. Sometimes their annual Christmas letter became a New Year's or Valentine's Day letter. (I think I even recall an Easter letter.) That's okay—I've only done Christmas letters perhaps half of the years my husband and I have been married. I need to re-evaluate that as a priority, as I certainly enjoy receiving them from others..

A friend let me borrow a wonderful book called *Unplug the Christmas Machine* by Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli. It was published in 1982 and I don't know if it is still in print, but it is a wonderful book with much insight as to how to put the love back into the season. These two women have conducted many workshops and seminars along this line before writing the book. Through their research they discovered that the four most important things children really want for Christmas are (no

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it's not Game Boy Advance, or Bratz Dolls):

1. Relaxed and loving time with the family
2. Realistic expectations about gifts
3. An evenly paced holiday season
4. Strong family traditions

The whole reason we want to give our children gifts at Christmas is to show them that they are loved and wanted. This can sometimes be self-defeating when we stress ourselves with so many expectations that we as parents end up being grouchy and depressed! And we spend so much time trying to accomplish every item on our "to do" list that we even spend less time than normal with our family.

I think that is why family Christmas traditions are so beloved and important. It is family time that can be remembered, counted on and carried on year after year to bring comfort and security.

This year re-examine what Christmas is and what you want it to be to you and your family.

Teresa Hansen is the creator of Moms Making It!<http://www.momsmakingit.com> sharing creative ideas to save time, save money, and enrich your life! She is a wife and mother of five children, and always looking for new ideas and products for moms "making it!" Get your free "Christmas Neighbor Gift Ideas" ebook by signing up for the newsletter at her site.

### **What Do You Want This Year?**

**By Angie Dixon**

Christmas is all around us, and many people are making up wish lists. Those who aren't doing that are busy setting down their New Year's Resolutions already. But this is a good time to sit down and do some serious introspection.

What do you want from the holidays this year? Do you want to rush around, spend a lot of money you don't have, and yell at the kids for not playing with all twenty of the toys they asked for--at the same time? Is that really how you want to spend Christmas?

We talk about "Christmas spirit," and mostly we mean giving. Giving of ourselves, giving to people who need it. That's great, that's Christmas spirit.

But I think there's another aspect to "Christmas spirit." I think it's spiritual. And don't close your screen on me because I said spiritual. I didn't say religious, because it's not. I think it comes from our souls.

I think deep down, each of us has a spirit that wants to be expressed. And I think at Christmas, when we're naturally thinking of others, that spirit is more easily expressed. I think if you want to, you can have a spiritual Christmas. You can feel loving, caring, generous. You can feel like a kid at Christmas,

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just by opening up to your spirit.

So what do you want this year?

Angie Dixon helps small business owners get their acts together. She is a personal development coach specializing in helping people integrate their home and work lives so they feel less stretched and more balanced. Get her FREE EBOOK on balance at

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to discover how coaching can change your life, contact Angie at

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What Do You Want This Year?

10 Ways to Keep Your Expectations From Making You Crazy This Christmas

Need To Recapture The Magic Of Christmas? Try Inspirational Christmas Stories!

What Do You Want for Christmas?

Celebrate With Christmas Decorations

Christmas Happy Package

The Big Book Of Cookie Recipes

120 Lip-Smacking Good Jam Recipes

Brew Your Own Beer

COCKTAILS - How to Make and Enjoy them



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