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Home For The Holidays: Ask Yourself Some Questions

By Linda LaPointe

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by: **Linda LaPointe**

Annie easily slipped into becoming the sole caregiver of her parents. What started out as monthly grocery shopping for them, over the course of 2 years became a full time duty, an overwhelming burden and just about broke her emotionally and financially.

They say that it's good that primary caregivers don't know what to expect or they would not enter into the situation. That is only true if they aren't honest with themselves and with others, don't research the many options and review the abundant material now available to families. Not everyone can take on the responsibility for any number of reasons. So potential caregivers of aging parents should ask themselves the following questions as the need for care and assistance begins to grow: What level of care am I able or willing to provide? At what point will I need to involve a professional, like a care manager or lawyer? How has my family resolved issues in the past involving difficult and complex concerns? Are my loved ones very private people and how can I best be respectful? What is my relationship with other care providers and how are our roles similar or different? Do I have the feeling my loved ones are making the right decisions about their future? Do other caregivers agree with me?

Gather the important people who participate in caring for the aging adult, then agree upon the specific roles that each person will play. Be honest about what you're able to give — for example, will you give more time or money?

Get the emotional support you received from your parents in the past in other ways.

Talk with friends who are in similar situations. Join a caregiver support group.

If you're sharing the caregiving tasks with siblings, keep the lines of communication open.

Send each other progress reports.

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Finally, find ways to have more fun with an aging or disabled adult for whom you feel responsible or love. Try to spend YOUR time doing things that will be most appreciated. Hire out house maintenance tasks, like lawn care and snow removal. Use a companion service for light housekeeping, meal preparation, grocery shopping and errands. Spend your time doing things WITH rather than FOR the older adult. Professional organizations can help with the mundane tasks so you can spend more quality time looking through photo albums, writing letters to out of town family, taking the grandkids to the park, or sharing a cup of tea.

Begin your journey of caregiving by defining preferences, plans and roles prior to being confronted and swept up by crises.

Linda LaPointe, MRA is an ElderLife Matters coach and author of several products to assist families experiencing aging including the pamphlet, Don't Be a Burden: 100 Tips. Get free articles and information at

How to Handle Christmas Before it Handles You :)

By Randy Mclean

How to Handle Christmas Before it Handles You :) by Randy Mclean

Ahh, the Holidays gotta love it. Family, fun, presents, and food! I guess you probably knew where that was going... :) Yes, we can't escape it but we can handle it...this months tip will show you just how to do that.

Many dread the holidays because of this fact...turkey, stuffing, chocolates you name it we'll eat it! No matter how strong a persons will power is they'll usually succumb to temptation. I will share with you some different ideas and perspectives on how to survive the onslaught of 'fearless feeding' most of us will partake in.

The first approach most will try is to lose the weight before the holidays. Sure, this approach is great but you have to be careful 1. That you avoid crash diets to get there and 2. You do not overcompensate during the holidays.

Let's start with number one. If you lose the weight too fast just so you can 'look good' for the holidays or maybe to possibly eat more you will no doubt put the weight back on. Your body is used to a 'set weight' and will be starving for nutrients. You'll usually blow up like a balloon and will be in the same situation (or worse) than when you started.

Number two, if you have dieted long and hard do not use this as a license to take in massive amounts of calories over too long a time...you'll just undo what you set out to do. Set in your mind from the start how long you plan to eat 'freely.' Maybe a week? You should know yourself over time what you can

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and can't get away with...above all it's only natural that 'treating' less days than you don't will be measured with success, it's just in the odds...use common sense.

Thirdly, the next group is those who are already dieting... If you are going to try and keep losing during the holidays...don't. You'll only be torturing yourself watching everyone else enjoy themselves. If you are doing particularly well just take a break and maintain during the holidays. Don't go over your body maintenance level everyday and you should be fine. You'll be able to eat more but at the same time you won't be eating too much in order to gain back what you've worked so hard to take off.

These same general principles also apply to those who haven't started a program yet. It might be a good idea to wait, especially at the beginning of a diet because you'll need greater will power. But do not make your situation worse. You can then get your revenge after the holidays!

In summary, just keep a clear head and you will see everything in perspective. Write your goals down, make a plan, draw charts in order to 'see' that it won't be that bad...whatever it takes. Then you will be able to enjoy the holidays...guilt free!

Randy Mclean has a diploma in Fitness and Nutrition from Education Direct, a YMCA individual

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