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Keeping it Simple this Season

By Merci Miglino

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by: **Merci Miglino**

It's back. The holiday season and all the challenges that come with it! This is the time when we are most tempted to overdo things – shopping, partying, spending.

This year...why not practice the art of simplicity and serenity? Begin a new tradition or fine tune an old one. Think 'less is more'... quality over quantity.

Remember that this is a time to celebrate love, connection, tradition and new beginnings. Make this a holiday season to remember and cherish. Pay attention to what really matters this time of the year and always... your family and friends, your health and well-being, your connection to the divinity of a universal spirit who gave us a holiday season just so we could help ourselves to platefuls of joy and love.

Q. I love this idea! But how do I get started on creating a new tradition?

A. Make a list of your most deeply felt intentions for the season. A better relationship with family? A chance to enjoy a holiday without stress and conflict? The willingness to take in the generosity of others? Light a candle daily. Choose a sophisticated blend of freshly cut balsam, frankincense, spiced cranberry and orange reminiscent of the season or one that evokes a calm and meditative state - a relaxing, soothing scent of peppermint, verbena and lavender. As you light the candle ask for the presence of mind to keep these intentions in mind during the season and all year long.

Q. I always spend more money than I intend and yet still feel that somehow I missed getting the ideal gift.

A. Set a budget and track your spending. This doesn't sound like much fun but when you determine exactly how much you want to spend and then actually spend just that amount, this will be the best holiday you ever had!

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Sometimes we need to remember to shop with our heart and soul, to use a kind of intuition or 'gut' wisdom to choose a gift. Narrow your shopping field to one store or product. Think quality vs. quantity. If your gift-giving follows this intention, you can't go wrong. Your choices will be in tune with the person you want to please while naturally keeping to the budget you set for yourself.

Q. I have so much to do this time of the year I miss out on all the 'cheer'.

A. Perhaps pass up a party and go shopping instead. Make shopping a social activity. Stop for a coffee or tea. Reminisce about holidays past. Wander and chat, admire the window displays, the mall decorations, and the twinkling lights. If you long for the romance and simplicity of holidays long ago, step back in time. Just the lingering scents and beauty of the season will inspire a festive and relaxing mood.

Q. Since my family lives far away and my children are grown I am having a hard time finding joy in this holiday season.

A. Transitions are never easy. We want to get them over with as soon as possible yet this, interestingly enough, only prolongs them. Consider instead appreciating where you are right now. Practice being ok with the sadness or grief that comes with losing the routines of the past. Do not resist the pain. While pain is a natural part of life - suffering is not. And suffering comes when we resist the natural pain of life. Be gentle with yourself. Hold yourself with kind regard. Pamper yourself with the sanctuary of a bath. The combination of delicate scents and warm water are soothing, nurturing and relaxing. When you are relaxed and refreshed, your new holiday season traditions will flow more easily.

Q. I can't just sit still when there's so much to do - yet I long to do just that! Help!

A. Yes, many women are so accomplished at 'doing' and 'striving' that we neglect the part of us that wants to 'receive', to take it all in and be still for a time. While taking up such practices as meditation during the holidays might be too much of a challenge consider finding just a minute or two to stare at a snowfall, take in the tree lights, meditate on the Menorah, agree with the angels and pray for peace.

For those who are especially challenged by sitting still, consider sitting still AND doing something at the same time! Watch all those corny holiday specials. Yes, even the cartoons, the original version of Miracle on 34th Street, and the classic It's a Wonderful Life. Be open to their simple but timeless message and let them warm you all over. And resist doing anything else while you watch the show!

Q. Every year I say I'm going to take time off from work for the holidays and every year I don't.

A. Explore why you stay at work. Do you fear all hell will break out if you take a day off? That no one can possibly cover for you? That you will worry all day about the job so what is the point of taking a day off? Generally these beliefs are not accurate or are based on a black and white perspective that has us convinced that something so terrible will happen if we are not at work and we will NEVER recover from it. Ask yourself, "Is this true?" Yes, you are in all likelihood the best woman for the job and yes, something could go wrong but will it DEFINITELY be a disaster? Not likely. Observe when you are in an all-or-nothing, always-and-never, black-and-white-perspective and ask: Is this true? It can change

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your life over night!

So take a risk and take some time off. Enjoy a day of baking cookies and sweets, making decorations, or doing a craft — without fitting them in between work, chores, and shopping. Do one thing at a time. Meet the challenge of single tasking. The rewards are immeasurable.

Q. It is so hard to celebrate with some of the bad things going on in the world.

A. We live in a time of incredible mass communication. But we have choices. Limit all news especially bad news. Watch a half-hour of news instead of 8 hours of CNN. Scan the newspapers and magazines headlines and read only what makes you feel good as well as informed. Acknowledge your fears for the future, find the courage in the peace and warmth of the season, and make a decision to celebrate in a bold and determined way!

Q. I love choosing my holiday cards - picking out just the right ones and sitting down with a cup of tea and cookies to write them out. But each year this becomes less of a pleasure and more of a pain.

A. Consider limiting your card list so you can still enjoy the ceremony and ritual of this tradition within the context of your realistic schedule. Break it into 3 lists:

List 1 – Write an old-fashioned, put-a-stamp-on-it letter to those you are especially missing this time of the year. Use some festive paper, a favorite writing tool and your best penmanship.

List 2 – Send cards to those who live far away to tell them you are thinking of them. Be discriminating. Do not include the people you hear from once in a blue moon and resist the compulsion to send a card to someone JUST because they sent you one.

List 3: Send everyone else a lovely email greeting.

Q. While I like the holidays I have a difficult time with the dark days and cold weather winter. I am more of a 'summer' person and this time of the year makes me long for the dog days of summer!

A. You are not alone. Many of us are warm weather, sun worshipers. Here's where you need your imagination and some help. Create a summer sanctuary stash with fragrance such as Crab Tree and Evelyn's Summer Hill products! Surround you and your home with the scent of summer evoking the memory of peach blossoms and bouquets of summer lilies, wildflowers and tuberose.

Q. This all sounds so good but is it realistic to have the kind of holiday I really, really want?

A. YES. It is all about choices - your underutilized super power! Start with scrutinizing your schedule. Ask yourself, "Is this activity obligation or choice?" If you come up with too many "obligation" answers, re-think your priorities. Set firm boundaries about what you willingly want to do and do just those things. It will be difficult at first but once you reap the rewards of an ideal holiday you will be motivated to use your powers of choice all the time!

Q. I want to find a way to let my spiritual self guide the holidays in a comfortable way.

A. Consider saying grace at mealtime. It doesn't have to be elaborate, formal or long. Just express your gratitude for the meal before you, the people with you and the good fortune to enjoy both. Oh and don't forget to acknowledge your good sense to stop and smell the roses or the holiday turkey!

Merci Miglino is well qualified to help you take the next step to accomplish what you want in your professional and personal life. Merci was educated as a teacher and worked as a journalist, paralegal, communications director and campaign manager. She has also been on the front lines of the retail, hospitality and advertising industries. Armed with this background Merci is a noted speaker, trainer and career coach. She is also a facilitator of the Personal Catalyst™, a unique, web-based life and career design tool that inspires extraordinary achievement. As if that were not enough, she has written a book, *From Doormat to Diva*© Taking Center Stage in your life. This woman knows success, personally and professionally, and she knows how to help you find it too.

How to Overcome the Overwhelm of the Holiday Season (And Reduce Holiday Stress)

By Donna P. Lendzyk

The Holiday Season can be a wonderful time of year, filled with lovely decorations, gift exchanges, visits with friends and family and delicious meals. But for many of us, the Holiday Season can also be quite overwhelming with all the added activities such as decorating our homes, selecting, buying, wrapping and exchanging gifts and hosting friends and family while we prepare multi-course elaborate meals! The question is, "What can we do to Overcome Overwhelm during the Holidays?"

1. Simplify Your Life

Holidays that are full of complexity are neither fun nor comfortable. Complexity can easily contribute to feeling overwhelmed. We can be invited to numerous events and want to host others ourselves. These activities can be very wonderful experiences, but there can also be too many to prepare for and attend in a short time. You may also have to consider selecting, wrapping and delivering gifts, decorating the house, and, potentially, traveling to visit friends and family across the country. Keeping the holidays simple with a manageable number of events to attend and/or host, can greatly contribute to Overcoming Overwhelm during the Holidays.

2. Practice Extreme Self-Care

In our fast paced world, often our physical bodies become the last priority. We drag our bodies around nonstop and we can be indifferent to signs of exhaustion. When we practice extreme self-care, our mind, body and spirit are much more likely to assist us in our other efforts by providing strong support including energy, enthusiasm and presence. With extreme self-care our energy is up, our confidence is high and we feel much more positive. Some examples of self-care activities include sufficient sleep, quiet time, exercise, healthy food, and joyful recreation. Often during the holidays, some of our self-care activities are put on hold with all the hustle and bustle of the season. Taking proper care of ourselves during the Holiday Season can contribute greatly to Overcoming Overwhelm during the

Holidays.

3. Celebrate the Unique You

Sometimes there are "should" or "must" dos on our to-do list that we really don't enjoy doing or don't leverage our best skills. We can end up delaying or not completing these activities. Or if we take these items on, they can contribute to frustration or overwhelm. Instead, we can consider whether there is someone else who can take care of the item for us or determine if the activity really needs to be done now.

There are many events and activities that we can participate in during the holidays on top of regular life activities. If we don't know what we really want during the Holiday Season, then it will be much harder to say no to invitations that do not align with our desires. A great place to start is to clearly define our preferences in writing. By sharing our vision of the ideal Holiday Season with our life partner, asking him or her what their desired Holiday Season looks like and integrating these two collaboratively, you

have a plan the two of you can action and support together for the Holiday Season. Celebrating the Unique You, by respecting and celebrating your desired Holiday Season, can greatly contribute to Overcoming Overwhelm and experiencing more power, serenity and joy during the Holiday Season.

Donna P. Lendzyk is a professional coach and businesswoman who guides women to Overcome Overwhelm and Achieve their Desired Results. She is the author of new multi-media "Overcome Overwhelm eProgram." Do you need any FREE strategies on Overcoming Overwhelm & Achieving Your Desired Results? Sign-up and receive "Overcome Overwhelm Secrets". This free, informative, multi-media enewsletter is available from:

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