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**Let the Holidays Be**

**By Lynn Cutts**

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Ah, the holidays. That sleepless time of the year. That season when we become so frantic and panicked and worried about everything we've got to do that we forget to enjoy the process. That season of giving. And shopping and wrapping and shipping. And decorating, cooking and cleaning. Meanwhile, the challenges of everyday life continue.

Every year, no matter how much I vow to not get caught up in the usual holiday frenzy, I find myself baking cookies I won't eat (that perpetual diet, you know), buying decorations I may not even display (and if I do, it will only be for this one year), and buying gifts I may not give (in case an unexpected Gift Giving Opportunity arises.) I get so involved in the doing, doing, doing that I often forget to just be. And more importantly, to let my family just be. After all, if I'm turning into a grouch because I'm cutting back on my sleep, making everyone miserable because I'm too busy to participate in my favorite rituals, and overspending all my husband's hard earned money (as well as my own!), then by Paul, George, John and Ringo, I'd better be appreciated for it!

I think I've figured part of it out. It's the "Last Chance to Shop for Christmas" messages that start as early as Halloween. I'm not exaggerating. I was receiving catalogs and advertisements reminding me that "There's still time to order by Christmas" as early as mid-November. Gosh, I hope so! The only people who are finished with their Christmas shopping more than two days before the big date (my mother comes to mind) are those who are a) incredibly efficient and organized, b) don't wait for the Christmas lists to come in from others but buy the first thing they see, c) have nothing else going on in their lives, or d) all of the above.

What if we tuned out all this last minute urgency and just accepted that we're going to be hitting the stores, along with all the other normal people, on December 23rd and 24th? The holidays aren't a race: no one gets an extra toy or more chocolate in their stocking because they had their shopping or baking or decorating done early. And even if we do get things done ahead of time, we'll find another holiday task (or ten) to fill up our newly discovered "spare" time.

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What if we turned getting ready for the holidays into part of the holidays? What if we stopped trying to finish everything earlier, better, and faster than everyone else, and enjoyed the preparations? After all, That Day will still come, whether you've baked ten kinds of cookies, or one, or bought some from a bakery. It will still come, whether there are 1500 lights on your house, or a wreath on the door. It will still come, whether you've got your shopping done by July 23rd, November 23rd, or December 23rd. And it will be just fine, no matter what.

And even if it doesn't turn out to be perfect, guess what? You get another crack at it next year.

So relax a bit. Spend time with friends and family. Give thanks for the bounty around you.

And have a wonderful holiday season.

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Lynn Cutts, the Muse of Manage Your Muse, is a life coach, writer, and general chocolate lover. To learn more about Lynn and her coaching, please visit her site at <http://www.ManageYourMuse.com>.

### **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

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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 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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