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Seven Tips in Planning a Fulfilling Holiday Experience

By David Gruder

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Holidays can activate powerful emotional charges, calling forth as much distress as joy. These "emotional charges" may be connected with past memories or with wishes we have in the present for ourselves, and those we love. This article reveals practical strategies for creating a more fulfilling and less stressful holiday experience, no matter which holiday it happens to be: religious or cultural, or personal celebrations such as birthdays and anniversaries of all kinds.

Holidays with strong emotional charges fall into two categories: family-focused & romantically-oriented. Family-focused holidays include Christmas for Christians, the High Holy Days and Passover for Jews, Thanksgiving in the U.S. & Canada, and so forth. Romantically-oriented holidays include New Years Eve, Valentines Day and other holidays when we wish to have a partner by our side, such as the office holiday party.

There are seven key dimensions to address in creating a nourishing holiday experience for yourself and those with whom you will be spending that holiday. They are:

1. **CELEBRATIONS & PLAYFULNESS:** Many holidays provide opportunities for both children and adults to come out and play. Consider what kinds of activities would add fun and celebration to this holiday for you, and with whom. Some long-standing traditions feel nourishing to continue and sometimes you'll want to create new traditions. Examples of playful celebration for holidays such as Christmas include parties, drives to the country, playing in the snow, caroling, tree decorating, attending concerts, etc.

2. **SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION:** Many holidays carry a deeper or more sacred significance that we wish to honor in some way. Which activities help you express your spiritual connection to this holiday? Examples of spiritual expression include meditating, prayer, attending services or rituals that are part of your chosen religious or spiritual tradition, volunteering in a soup kitchen or making other donations to charity, reading stories about the origins of the holidays you're celebrating, etc.

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3. **REMEMBERING:** Holidays tend to be particularly uncanny in their ability to invite old memories and recent losses to our awareness. We may find ourselves remembering pleasant and painful holidays from our past. We may have experienced the death or loss of someone important to us over the past year. Others who are precious to us may be unable to be with us for this holiday. Because these issues come to the surface during the holidays, devote some time to honoring those people and memories. Set aside time, alone or with others, to remember those who you wish could be with you during this holiday and to grieve or honor those who have died or left your life this past year.

4. **COMPLETING & LOOKING FORWARD:** Some holidays, particularly those occurring toward the end of the year, offer natural opportunities to review the past year and set goals for the next. What goal-setting rituals feel nourishing to you to do, alone or with others? Examples of New Years rituals include doing a year-end review, expressing gratitude you feel for what you've learned over the past

year, making amends with others, setting goals for the coming year, and expressing wishes you have for others and for the world in the coming year. Make plans for creating this holiday in a happier and/or more fulfilling way next year and forgiving yourself for what you didn't do this year. Remember that changing holiday traditions takes time – often years – to fine-tune!

5. **GIVING & SPENDING:** Many holidays are times of giving. This means there is the danger of over-giving. Over-giving includes spending too much money on gifts, too much energy cooking and too much time with people you'd rather not be with. Giving without regard to your own boundaries inevitably leads to resentment and exhaustion. An "Over-Giving Prevention Plan" can help: a commitment to giving out of love rather than giving out of guilt. Find your limits based on the life energy you have rather than "shoulds" or expectations. Pay attention not only to total amounts of time and money but also to the amount of time or money you can lovingly devote to a particular task, activity or person without becoming resentful. What can you give and spend, and with whom, without resentment? How much money can you spend on gifts (or how much time can you spend making gifts) and sending holiday cards, and for whom, without becoming resentful? Allow yourself to get honest with yourself and live in alignment with your boundaries and your integrity.

6. **PERSONAL RE-CENTERING ACTIVITIES:** Many holidays are preceded by preparation, which means the danger of neglecting the self-care activities that keep you centered and energized. Being true to your personal boundaries can help you maintain your self-care routines. This will help make any holiday more joyous. Make specific self-care commitments to yourself ahead of time. It's okay to take "time-outs" from the family or the hustle and bustle. Going on regular walks (alone or with others you feel particularly nourished to be with), checking in with growth-oriented friends, going to support group meetings, journal writing and meditation, and eating and sleeping well are all part of a wonderful self-care plan. Which self-care/re-centering activities will work for you?

7. **PLANNING FOR GLITCHES:** Most of us can reasonably predict where the hurts or fights will arise surrounding any given holiday, the varieties of distress that happen each year, and with which people these will occur. Make a list ahead of time of the types of incidents you anticipate could occur and the specific new actions you are willing to take this year to take better care of yourself when or if these circumstances arise.

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I know from personal experience that these strategies really do work to support joy and love during any holiday. I wish you a nourishing holiday experience!

Dr. David Gruder is a California licensed psychologist & Director of Willingness Works. An award-winning self-improvement author, he also has over 70 audios, & provides keynotes & workshops internationally for the public, health pros & business. For more about how to have a happier holiday experience, go to

<http://www.willingness.com>

and click on "Solutions."

Holiday Party Planning

By Mrs. Party Gail Leino

'Tis the season to have a party and invite all your family and friends to celebrate the holidays with you. Have a family day and decorate the entire house with

holiday party decorations

. Your family will enjoy how festive the home is before and after the holiday

party.

When decorating, make sure you have all the party supplies that you will need before the actual party day. Plan out the food and drinks you will be serving. Make a list of everything you need to purchase to help get you ready. If you are preparing any new dishes or appetizers, try them out in advance on your family and neighbors. You want to have all the quirks of any new recipes worked out before your party. It is a nice idea to give each of your guests

holiday party favors

as a token of your appreciation

for them attending your party. Choosing the perfect favors for your party can be a way to cleverly tie in the

holiday theme

with your own individual touch.

Bring a festive holiday party atmosphere to your party with

holiday party music

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and lights. For the

music, select a few of your favorite holiday albums to play so you can have some variety. It is fun to gather your guests together to sing old favorites. For the lighting, you can string lights on both the inside and outside of your home. You can also cluster some holiday scented candles together for a dramatic lighting effect.

Have the smell of holiday cheer in the air. Simmer cinnamon sticks on the stove to provide the holiday scent. These provide a pleasant holiday aroma to your home. Plan some

holiday party games

that will excite and engage all of your guests. You can have fun holiday party

prizes for the winners of the games.

Mrs. Party... Gail Leino is the internet's leading authority on giving the best possible

party

, using proper

etiquette and manners while also teaching organizational skills and fun facts.

Holiday Party Planning

Plan To Manage Holiday Stress

Selecting A Party Theme

Boat Charters

Boating Holiday Together With Family

Palmistry

Time Stretching Tips

The Classified List

The Big Book Of Cookie Recipes

Brew Your Own Beer



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