



## PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

# Minimize stress—maximize meaning

*Amid the sea of advertising, malls, crowds, and time pressures, it can be difficult to maintain calm during the holiday season. By answering the questions below—and then heeding the insights from your answers—you can begin to reshape your holiday so it is less stressful and more meaningful.*

- What things about the season make you crazy?
- What parts of your holiday routine deplete rather than restore?
- What are your favorite parts of the holiday season?
- What traditions are most important to you?

In addition to heeding the insights from your answers above, Barbara Hemphill, a renowned organizational expert, offers excellent suggestions for reducing stress and increasing meaning. She notes that the further we go from the meaning of the holidays—celebrating a spirit of service and altruistic generosity—the less we enjoy them.

## 10 Tips for Meaningful Holidays, by Barbara Hemphill (reprinted with permission)

No matter how many lists you make, cards you send, gifts you buy, or packages you wrap, there will be things you intended to do this holiday season that won't get done. If you do manage to get everything done, but you're too tired to enjoy the season, everyone suffers.

Consider these tips to minimize your stress and maximize the meaning this holiday season:

1. **Tamper with tradition.** Dragging yourself through "we've always done it" rituals when they've lost their meaning, and you've lost your energy, does not contribute to holiday joy.
2. **Begin the season by making a list** - but don't stop there. Pick out the most important item, the second, and on down the list. Remember, a creative mind always has more ideas than the body can accomplish!
3. **Use your calendar** - not just for appointments with other people, but with yourself as well. If you plan to send cards, estimate how much time it will take to write and address them, and block out that time on your calendar.
4. **Ask your family what's important.** Using prepared foods instead of home-cooked means more time for sharing new sports equipment and relaxing with friends.
5. **Avoid perfectionism in gift-giving.** It's the thought that counts. Choose one or two gifts that can be used for several people. A relaxed parent or hostess is a greater gift than anything money can buy.
6. **Focus your energy.** If your family isn't as excited as you are about decorating the whole house, invest your efforts on what means the most to you.
7. **If the holidays bring pain because of death, divorce, or family far away, be gentle with yourself.** Recognize that grief is healthy and that next year will be better, even if you can't believe it today. Concentrate on making other people's holiday more joyful.
8. **Take time out from total togetherness.** Let your child call a friend and take a nap. Give your siblings the car keys and a map. The idea is for everyone to enjoy the occasion.

9. **Be clear about expectations.** If you never tell your family what you want them to do, it's unfair to expect them to know.

10. **Look over your list, leave off what you can live without, and enjoy the real reason for the season.**

Barbara Hemphill, CPO® is one of the country's leading productivity experts, helping individuals and organizations create and sustain a productive environment. She is author of the best-selling "Taming the Paper Tiger" book series. In the upcoming book, "Bushido Business," Barbara joins Tom Hopkins, Brian Tracy & Stephen M. R. Covey, in sharing success secrets. For more information on Barbara's speaking and consulting, visit [www.barbarahemphill.com](http://www.barbarahemphill.com).

***Additional resources:***

*How to Have Mindful and Meaningful Holidays* (<http://bit.ly/95UjCF>)

*Does a White Christmas Make You Blue?* (<http://bit.ly/9rWpoT>)

*Christmas Holiday Depression* (<http://bit.ly/7hwVMu>)

*Women Experience More Holiday Stress than Men, Study Says* (<http://bit.ly/bbKhMy>)

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*Reclaim your Holidays is a project of the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy & Environmental Education. Support for this project is provided by the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) Conservation Education Program and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives Program Agreement Number 10-G550-41FL. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDNR.*

*For more information, visit [www.ReclaimYourHolidays.org](http://www.ReclaimYourHolidays.org).*