



Eight Steps for Creating Richer, More Meaningful Celebrations

(Pocket Guide-Option 3)

Time: 25-30 minutes; adaptable to 40- to 45-minute presentations

Audience: Adult audiences such as civic groups, congregations, parents, seniors

Preparation: 1) Make copies of the Pocket Guide found at

<http://www.uni.edu/ceee/hometown/reclaim-your-holidays/toolsforyheducators>; 2)

Sample copies of handouts from <http://www.uni.edu/ceee/hometown/reclaim-yourholidays/toolsforyheducators#Handouts>

Supplies needed: Copies of [Pocket Guide](#) for each participant; Paper and pencils for each participant; Sample copies of [handouts](#).

Learning objectives: At the conclusion of your session, participants will be able to say: *I can...*

Identify at least two actions to take to create richer, more meaningful celebrations.

- *Commit to taking one action to make a holiday or celebration more meaningful and pleasurable.*
- *Retrieve additional information about topics such as gift-giving, entertaining, communicating effectively and sustainability.*

<p>3-5 min.</p>	<p>Welcome/Icebreaker Introduce yourself, welcome participants, and ask everyone to go around the room and complete the sentence, “One of the things I love most about the holiday season (or “love about celebrations”) is...” Model this activity by sharing what you love. (For larger groups, ask participants to break into groups of three to five to share.)</p> <p>After this exercise, explain that this session is part of a state Reclaim Your Holidays initiative, a program of the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education in partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Two grant programs in Iowa—the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act Conservation Education Fund and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives Program—have provided support for this project. You can find out more about this initiative—and get many more ideas for reclaiming holidays and celebrations—at ReclaimYourHolidays.org.</p>
<p>13-14 min.* <i>*Note: This exercise could extend for 30 min., if time allowed.</i></p>	<p>Pocket Guide Next, distribute copies of the Reclaim Your Holidays Pocket Guide (found at http://www.uni.edu/ceee/hometown/reclaim-your-holidays/toolsforyheducators under RYH Pocket Guide). As you distribute copies, explain that this Pocket Guide and many other free resources to help people manage their holidays more effectively can be found at ReclaimYourHolidays.org. See Attachment A for an Instructor’s copy of the Pocket Guide.</p> <p>Review the tips in the Pocket Guide in detail. If time doesn’t allow you to review them all, encourage participants to review the remainder on their own time and keep the guide in their billfold as a reminder during the holiday season.</p>

5-6 min.	<p>Commitment to Action Invite participants to take a few minutes to think of one action they will take this holiday season or at their next celebration to make it more meaningful and pleasurable. Then ask them to share this commitment with their elbow partner. After a few minutes, ask as many as time permits to share their actions with the entire group. (Research shows that publicly stating the actions they plan to take helps participants commit to taking those actions.)</p>
2-3 min.	<p>Conclusion Conclude by encouraging participants to check out the website (ReclaimYourHolidays.org) where</p>
	<p>they can find many creative gift and entertaining ideas. They can also find resources to help them save money and live more sustainably. Several resources provide how-tos on communicating effectively with friends and families about gift-giving and other challenging issues that sometimes crop up during the holiday season or at celebrations.</p> <p>Refer to the cover of the Pocket Guide, which gives the website address.</p> <p><i>Optional (if time allows): Share the following story from Unplug The Christmas Machine, by Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli, about one person's idea of a meaningful Christmas. Acknowledge that this is a Christmas story, but the generosity depicted in the story applies to many types of holidays and celebrations.</i></p> <p><i>“In early December, when Jim was driving his family home from a school crafts fair, he stopped the car so a bent old man could cross the street. Jim watched the man’s slow progress for a moment, and then made a quick decision. Without saying a word, he pulled the car over to the curb, reached for a package of cookies he had bought at the fair, jumped out of the car, and ran after the old man. As Jim overtook him, the old man became alarmed. He wheeled around and drew back his fist, as if trying to defend himself.</i></p> <p><i>“Jim quickly said that he wasn’t going to hurt him. When the man realized that Jim had something to give him, his eyes filled with tears and he asked Jim why he was giving him a present. Jim was surprised to hear himself say, “Because it’s Christmas and I love you.”</i></p> <p><i>“As the old man accepted the cookies, Jim felt tears coming to his eyes, too. I was overcome with emotion for this stranger,” he told us. “That moment captured the true meaning of Christmas for me.”” (Unplug the Christmas Machine, p. 107)</i></p> <p>Wish participants a joyful celebration/holiday.</p>

References:

Robinson, Jo and Jean Coppock Staeheli, *Unplug the Christmas Machine*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.

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.



Actions for a richer, more meaningful future

The holidays can be a time when we spend money and effort on a lot of material goods that don't make us much—if any—happier. This year, consider ways you can have richer, more fulfilling holidays.

Actions	Tips for success	For use by Instructors only:
<i>Identify 1-3 priorities for the holiday season.</i>	Keeping your highest values in mind, first make a list of your wishes for the season. To help, review memories and moments of greatness in holiday gift-giving and celebrations. Second, ask yourself what makes you flourish at holidays. With these things in mind, list your holiday wishes, then prioritize.	Ask participants to think of at least one memory or moment of greatness during a holiday of the past. Give them time to write this down or get the image in their mind. Knowing what has worked in the past will give them “bright spots” on which to build this year’s celebration. Ask a few to share, briefly. Be prepared to offer a few of your own if participants aren’t sharing. For example, priorities may include time for spiritual growth and time for deepening relationships with family members. (4-5 min.)
<i>Make time for your priorities.</i>	Unplug the TV, the Internet, electronic games, or whatever takes time and energy without payoff.	<p>As the instructor, consider sharing something you have done to make more time for your priorities. You might also share something you would like to try in the coming holiday season. (Example: To have a more relaxed holiday, I will stay off of the computer next weekend. I also plan to schedule two coffees with friends, as they are a priority.)</p> <p>Then ask participants if they will commit to reducing some activity that is currently taking time and energy that could better be spent on holiday priorities. Give them at least one minute to think about this and jot notes to themselves. Consider allowing time for several to share ways they might “find time.”</p> <p>Ask them to write down this commitment now and to consider posting it in a place where they will read it daily. (3-4 min.)</p>
<i>Seek support to facilitate success.</i>	Share your priorities with loved ones, and learn theirs. Try to support one another. For help,	For change to occur, it’s important to get buy-in from family members or others. It is also important to find people who share similar values and
	reach out beyond your friends and family to a spiritual guide, a therapist, or books/blogs/websites.	aspirations. (1-2 min.)

<i>Consider the environment when making gift-giving decisions.</i>	Ask friends what makes them flourish. Use that information to help identify gift ideas. Gifts of experience, foods and beverages tend to be kinder on the environment than stuff.	Consider sharing at least one activity that makes you flourish. Baking, singing, spiritual activities, listening to music, carving out quiet time for relaxing may be examples. Invite participants to share here as well, if time permits, or refer back to examples listed in the Icebreaker activity. (2-4 min.)
<i>Invest in at least one thing that is larger than yourself.</i>	Build community by volunteering. To learn of opportunities, check your local newspaper or join a club or group. Contributions to charitable causes also give back to the world.	Share possible volunteer opportunities or ask participants to share some of the most rewarding volunteer activities they have been involved with. In addition, offer that participants could brainstorm a few special things they could do for people anonymously. Then, do those things. It might be as simple as paying for the next customer's coffee at a local coffee house. (2-4 min.)
<i>Be grateful.</i>	Before you go to bed, complete the sentence: I am thankful for...	Research shows that “people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits: Stronger immune systems and lower blood pressure; Higher levels of positive emotions; More joy, optimism and happiness; Acting with more generosity and compassion; Feeling less lonely and isolated.” (Retrieved April 22, 2013 at http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/expandinggratitude .) You might give participants a few minutes to think about what they are grateful for and share this with their neighbor in the workshop. (2-4 min.)
<i>Be realistic about holiday expectations for yourself and others.</i>	Avoid perfectionism—tell yourself “okay” is good enough. Continually remind yourself of your priorities, and then shed what you can live without.	Share something you have done to reduce expectations. Drawing names as a way to limit time shopping for gifts and making fewer dishes for meals are two examples. Then ask participants to exchange what they have done either with their elbow partner or by asking several to tell the large group what they have done. (1-2 min.)
<i>Make decisions based who you want to be in this world.</i>	Think daily about your values and what makes you flourish. Focusing on these things will help you discover who you want to be and how to live this one great life you have!	One optional activity is to encourage participants to go to ReclaimYourHolidays.org and complete the <i>Pick 5</i> survey which will help them identify their values. Optional: Do this activity as a wrap-up to the session. (1-3 min.)

This handout, without the instructor's notes, may be printed as a pocket guide at http://www.uni.edu/ceee/sites/default/files/Hometown/ceee_ryh_pocketguide_one.pdf.

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.