# The Holiday Season: Healthy or Hectic?

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In this day and age, the Holidays are often one of the few times that families get together, across generations and distance. This can bring both joy and pain. Depending on the dynamics, the situations and the life stage of the family, Christmas, Hanukkah or Ramadan get-togethers can be either healthy or downright detrimental to one's health. If one is obligated to celebrate with family members who feel like distant strangers, it is likely that even anticipating the event will bring stress. On the other hand, if the celebration brings waves of happy nostalgia, fond memories and new moments of closeness, the holidays can offer rich health boosting scoops of wonderful healing love and closeness.

## The Ties that Bind

Relationships can be the biggest source of holiday joy or grief. Often, an attempt to create the picture-perfect family at Holiday time can cause unnecessary stress and burden on everyone involved. There can be a conflict of plans, traditions and personal preferences or a resurgence of old dysfunctional patterns. The best advice is to keep it as simple and relaxed as possible. Allow all parties to be involved in the planning and delegate specific responsibilities to various willing members. Try to accept your family for what they are - adopt a philosophical perspective which allows you to appreciate each person's individuality. No family is perfect, but each is worth celebrating.

## Economic Pressures

Often the most common problem in creating a pleasant and festive holiday is raising the funds to pay for it. Many families have a hard time coping with the expense which can dampen their perceptions of the holidays. Again, being philosophical helps, along with careful planning and the age-old adage, keep it simple. The simple and constant things of life can bring joy to a household just as much as bright tinsel and expensive presents. Families often find that a holiday budget can help them create a happy celebration without putting themselves in serious debt.

## Stress can take its Toll

The whole business of preparing for the holidays can be downright stressful. Shopping, cooking, cleaning, traveling and so on put pressure on our bodies and minds. Overeating and drinking add to the toll. Try to pace your activities and maintain a relaxed frame of mind. This is the trick in feeling the Holiday Spirit. If you can approach each task in a serene and calm way, it will feel like the holiday preparation is moving along like a lyrical sacred dance. Give yourself lots of time, plan things carefully and commit only to the activities that you really want to participate in. Everyone will be happier if the tension is kept to a minimum.

All in all, holiday magic is a frame of mind. It isn't the presents, the delicious food, the snowy starry night or families gathering to celebrate. It comes from the warmth inside your heart, the keen perception of your open and curious mind, the cozy touch of a loved one's hug or the warmth of a fire. Most of all, it is a spiritual kinship, regardless of creed and religion. It is a communion with the world around you, family and stranger alike. Bring a little magic to the Holidays this year. You will be healthier, saner and happier for it! Happy Holidays!!!