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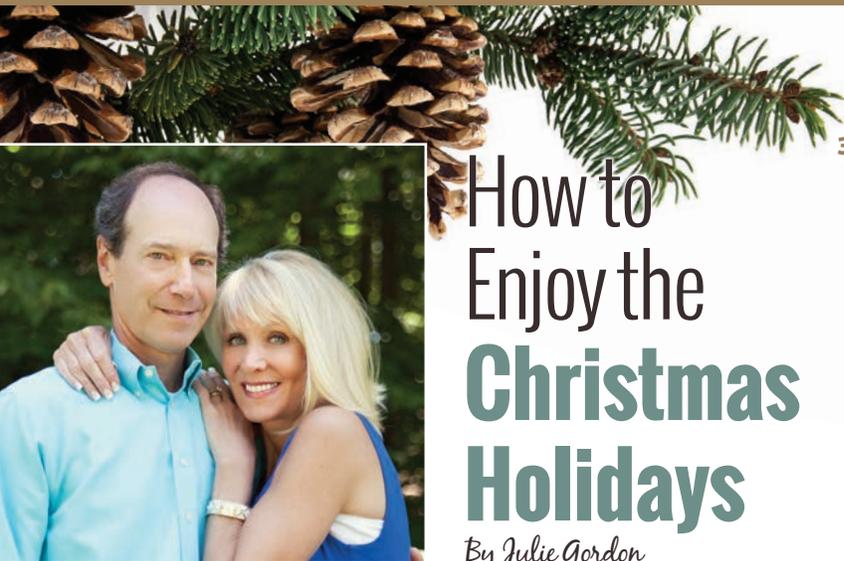
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How to Enjoy the Christmas Holidays

By Julie Gordon

When we're traveling, we often stop at Cracker Barrel to eat breakfast. The gift shop cracks me up. One of their whimsical signs that you can purchase says, "I'll be home for Christmas and in therapy by New Year's." If your family is more like the TV show, the Waltons, then you probably don't need to read this. However, if you identified with the Cracker Barrel sign, this might help you.

Here are five suggestions that will ensure that you enjoy the Christmas holidays.

1. The first secret is to get your expectations down. I mean waaayyyy down. Maybe the turkey will be tough this year. Maybe someone will break one of your wedding plates that are no longer available. One of your children might embarrass you in front of your sister-in-law's perfect kids. Your husband may sit on the sofa and watch football instead of offering to help. Your teenager's boyfriend brought mud in on your new carpet. Get your expectations down and then when good things happen, you can enjoy them. Lowering expectations of a "Hallmark" Christmas is step one.
2. Secret number two is to decide not to be offended. Aunt Martha is going to make a comment about your weight. Cousin Henry rsvp'd but didn't show up and you waited an hour on him. Someone will ask you if you've read any of the new parenting books, suggesting that it's obvious you need to. Your husband will ask you if you read the recipe carefully because this dish doesn't taste like his mother's. Your sister-in-law will talk to one of your other sisters the whole time, clearly demonstrating her preference for her. Your brother's girlfriend signed up for dessert and brought one pie to feed 20 people. Just get ready. Decide now to "overlook a transgression." Just let it pass.

3. Secret number three is to SAW. We rush around with the linens and the decorations, but we forget the main thing: the people we love. It's easy to go through the entire holidays, and not express affection to those that we care about. SAW stands for "sensitivity, affection, and warmth."

Pick out some people you love, and be sure and SAW them in an obvious manner. Tell your teenagers how proud of them you are for some character quality. Tell your mother how much you appreciate the example she's given you. Tell your dad that you will always be "daddy's girl." Tell your son that you always knew he'd be a great father. Express these things. We all long to hear them. But focus on how you give and love, not on how others give and love you.

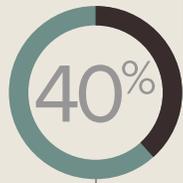
4. Secret number four is to make a decision to overcome your normal negative tendency to focus on what is wrong and instead, command your mind to focus on all that is right. Before I got out of bed this morning, I realized I had 4 negative thoughts already. Enough of that, I said. I started thinking and listing the 1000's of blessings that I have. You have 1000's of blessings, too. If we could hook your brain up to a computer and see your thoughts, that would explain your mood issues. Negative thoughts make negative moods. Happy thoughts make happy moods. You get to choose your thoughts. Get rid of the troublemakers. List your problems in your journal, pray diligently over them, get counsel to help you deal with them, and take massive daily action to proactively solve them. Then, put your problems on a shelf in heaven. The Accuser will beat you up with your weaknesses and with the WMD (what's missing and disappointing) if you don't "gird up the loins of your mind." Your mind is a vast empire and you are the Emperor. You get to choose what you think about. You create your inner world by choosing your thoughts. That's why Philippians 4:8 tells us what to think about. Thoughts produce corresponding emotions.
5. And secret number five, as you expected, is to spend time in prayer before the holidays. Pretty table linens can be bought at Bed, Bath, and Beyond, but there's only one place to get the peace that passes understanding.

Have a great Christmas!



Drinking and DUIs/DWIs during the holidays

% of Highway Deaths
Related to
Alcohol



of traffic-related deaths during the holidays are a result of drunk drivers



Source: NHTSA

Thanksgiving

35%

Christmas

41%

New Year's

58%

Holiday Drinking Trends



of adults say they drink more than usual during the holidays



of those who have attended a holiday work party have felt pressured to drink



of people say that alcohol plays a role in their family's holiday gatherings



of adults went to work hung over after a party, or know someone who did

Source: Harris Interactive Survey for Caron Treatment Centers



scramsystems.com/soberdaysfortheholidays

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*The greatest professional compliment we can receive is when one of our clients refers a friend, family member, or neighbor to our firm. **Thank you!** We appreciate your confidence in us.*



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Risk of home fire increases in winter

As the temperature drops, the risk of a home fire increases substantially. The most likely cause of a home fire is cooking. The second most likely cause of a home fire is a space heater. Space heaters are also involved in 79% of home fire deaths. To decrease the chances of disaster, some safety precautions can be taken.

Never leave a space heater running in a room that is unoccupied. Plug space heaters directly into an outlet, do not use an extension cord or power strip. Keep anything that can catch fire at least three feet away from any space heater. According to the National Fire Protection Association, half of all home fires start because something is too close to a heater.

It is important to make sure your furnace is in good working order to decrease the risk of fire. Have a professional inspect the furnace once per year to make sure everything is in order. This carries the additional benefit of making sure your unit is

running efficiently and saves you money on costly repairs that can be prevented with regular maintenance.

If you have a fireplace, have your chimney cleaned and inspected once per year. Do not burn trash, paper, or green wood in your fireplace. Make sure your screen is big enough that it contains any and all flying sparks.

Use common sense in the kitchen to keep fire from sparking up. Keep towels and any other flammable items far away from burners. Do not leave cooking items unattended. Do not use your oven to heat your home.

Just being aware of fire danger goes a long way to preventing home fires. Take these safety precautions and pay attention to the risks and you will greatly decrease the chance that disaster strikes your home.