

Seven Simple Steps to Stress -free Holidays

Dorothea Hover-Kramer

www.secondchancedream.com

Our thoughts are exceedingly powerful. Think about the human collective thoughts that have created a holiday season that celebrates, in part, a humble man born in a barn who generously taught and gave to others for free. But, instead of following his call to simplicity, love, and inner harmony, his birthday and surrounding holidays have become a time of high expectations of ourselves and others. Often, even thoughts of “the holidays” generate a sense of gloom, anxiety, and personal stress.

Clearly, we deserve to rethink ways of having meaningful end-of-year-holidays that neither strain our budgets nor our coping skills. For example, the intention to create something meaningful with your friends or families during the holidays can begin anytime. If you care for someone, you might see an item that is “just right” during the calendar year. Sharing something, even small, from an adventure you had enriches the personal value of the gift. It becomes a sign of your thoughtfulness instead of a measure of your pocketbook.

Reaching beyond the idea of gift-giving, think of a valued service you could perform for someone you love. This would mean giving of yourself, your time, and energy at an entirely different level from fighting crowds in a store. Pet-cargiving, house-watching, picking up food items or prescriptions, researching information on the Internet, sitting with someone who needs a companion, helping with planning for an outing—all are needed in some way by most people you know. A clever homemade “gift certificate” can document your specific objective to help out.

The new science of energy psychology also provides self-care tools that can help us to reshape our beliefs and empower reaching out with simple gestures to others. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- **Take time to think** about each person you wish to reach. Think of the senses the person most enjoys—visual beauty, music, something to touch, a smell or taste. Be creative in

connecting with their interests or wishes which may be very similar to your own.

- **Be open to accepting help** for yourself. Think about what gives you pleasure or enhances your appreciation of life. Let your wishes and interests be known so your loved ones have a direction for giving back. For example, if you like to cook but hate to shop, ask for someone to shop for the needed ingredients or to help with clean-up.
- **Treat any limiting belief** about how things ought to be with a gentle rub to the heart area and the affirmation, “Even though this year is different from the past, I deeply and profoundly accept myself and my willingness to try out new ways to celebrate my friendships and life.” Look for opportunities to celebrate by collaborating with others.
- **Set your intention** for the kind of holiday you really want by tapping gently on the center of the chest, the thymus area that is the master gland of the immune system. Share your intention with your loved ones so they can support your goal.
- **Notice your internal stress levels** which may register with bodily symptoms such as shortness of breath, sweating, feeling cold, or intestinal cramping. Also note any anxious feelings, worry about expenses or outcomes of get-togethers.
- **Treat your anxiety directly** by tapping gently 10-15 times on the meridian acupoints that are most related to anxiety: where the eyebrow meets the nose, at the outer eye, under the lip, at the collar bone and at the side of the hand. Use a reminder phrase such as “releasing this worry” with each of the acupoints you treat.
- **Repeat a positive phrase** that reminds you often of your intention to lower expectations of yourself and others while at the same time reaching out in fun-loving, genuine ways. “I choose to expect less, love more” provides one such direct communication. You can install the positive phrase by tapping the same acupoints as those listed.

Often, spontaneous times of laughing, eating, and talking will be recalled more than a fancy gift or endeavor. I asked my adult children recently what they most remembered about past holidays. Like most moms, I worked hard to buy the gifts they wanted, cook the right foods, decorate the house, and invite their friends. I was surprised at the answers: “ I liked the candles and the smell of balsam”... “doing the dishes and singing rounds”... “hearing the bells and the songs”... “having warm socks and clothes”... “the smell of cookies in the oven”... “making a dish together in the kitchen”... “telling each other stories.”

There was no mention of designer clothes, shopping at the malls, trips to special places, or specific gifts although I did my best to supply these. It was the climate of caring and warmth that counted and was most remembered.

May your holidays be rich with a celebration of your sharing, your reflections, your unique presence, and, with it, your laughter!

Dr. Dorothea Hover-Kramer, leading “re-firement expert” is the author of *Second Chance at Your Dream*, a book filled with over fifty energy psychology self-care exercises.