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12 Rules for a More Peaceful and Happy Holiday

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Oftentimes it's hard to find inner solace and elation when the holiday to-do list runs amuck. When the house is strewn with unwrapped gifts and you haven't had time to hang the stockings over the chimney, the season can seem more like an endless burden than a joyous event. Amidst such pre-celebration chaos, these twelve simple rules will help you restore inner peace and experience a greater sense of happiness throughout the bustling season.

Rule 1 Wanting Everything To Be Perfect Is In Your Head

Especially if you are the hostess, remember that your guests are much more interested in filling their stomachs with great food than judging the scuff marks on your kitchen floor or the new ding in your wallpaper that you stare at every day. The perfection of this season is found in the special moments when families and friends sit down together, not the state of your abode.

Rule 2 Pay Attention To The Smiles

As we get closer and closer to the holiday, there are more smiles, kind words and thoughtful gestures shared than at any other time of year. While you are out and about, look for the grins and well wishes. Start holding the door open for others and add a friendly greeting at check out time. You will find yourself smiling more too because thoughtfulness is contagious.

Rule 3 Do Nothing For 15 Minutes

It's amazing how refreshed you'll feel when you take a few minutes to sit down in a comfortable chair and experience a moment of stillness. This inner quiet allows the mind to relax and move energy back into the body so that you can return to holiday activities with renewed zest.

Rule 4 Give Each Person 1 Non-Monetary Gift

This holiday, give each person in your family a thoughtful, non-monetary gift. Think of something that you enjoy doing together or an experience that can be shared and write a promissory note for a backrub, a day downtown, a personal manicure or agree to go to a movie that the other person wants to see. These are some of the best gifts you can give.



Rule 5 **Take Advantage Of Extended Shopping Hours**

If you are not a fan of crowds and long lines, schedule a late night power shopping trip. This is the easiest way to run through an entire department store with sanity, access to the full sweater stock and get immediate service.

Rule 6 **Allow Yourself A Holiday Binge Day**

You're entitled to have a day with no limits and no self judgment. For anyone who mentally monitors their calories, claim a binge day out loud and give yourself permission for total holiday munching freedom. Tomorrow you can go back to the treadmill and calorie counting, but there is nothing more liberating than full, open permission to eat.

Rule 7 **Sing While You Work**

Nothing makes the chore of peeling potatoes, dicing onions and whipping peaks of fresh cream go faster than crooning along to your favorite carols. Turn up Susan Boyle's O Holy Night and before you know it, your lungs will be full of air, heart filled with sentiment and turkey full of bread crumbs.

Rule 8 **Express Yourself In a Healthy Way**

Family gatherings can sometimes test our boundaries and patience. Avoid stuffing your feelings by finding a way to speak your truth in the moment, in a calm and healthy fashion. This is important because there's nothing worse than getting home and stewing about what you wish you could have, or would have said.



Rule 9 **Assign Roles To Household Helpers**

The holiday load is much lighter when everyone pitches in. Be sure to assign specific roles to household members with clear responsibilities. When the garbage taker-outer does his job and the table-setter does her job and the dish-rinser steps up to the plate, your holiday work will be considerably less.

Rule 10 **Leave Some Tasks For Tomorrow**

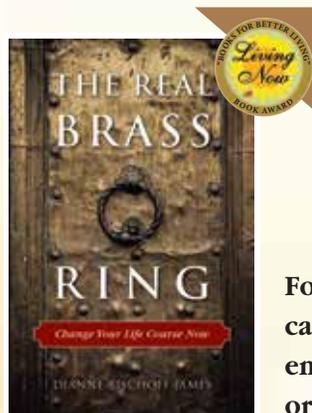
It's totally unrealistic to think your house has to be in perfect order after a million presents have been ripped open and a sit down meal served. After the guests leave, put the leftovers in the fridge, sit down, and watch a movie. The mess will still be there when you wake up, but clean-up will go a lot faster after a good night of sleep.

Rule 11 **Express Your Gratitude At The Table**

It might be a bit cliché, but loving feelings can never be expressed enough, so use the holiday as an opportunity to tell others how important they are to you. Create a heart-felt moment at the table by sharing at least one thing that you're truly grateful for and ask everyone else does the same.

Rule 12 **Go Outside For Fun (non-shopping related)**

Hiking in a nearby forest preserve, skating, sledding or building a snow fort with the kids not only burns energy, but is emotionally exhilarating for the whole family. Pick an outdoor activity, bundle up and share in the fun and serenity of a glistening winter day. When everyone's cheeks are nice and pink, hot chocolate is the perfect treat with lots of marshmallows and laughs.



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