

10 Steps to a Stress-Free Holiday

"The stress-free way to enjoy the holidays is to plan, take one step at a time, and have a sense of humor." Beth Tabak

Can you feel the holiday jitters beginning? Suddenly there it is right around the corner. Relax! Take time to plan well today and ease into the holidays with a big smile. Grab your journal and pen, and let's get started.

1- Reminisce over previous holidays- In your journal create two columns and label them What Works and Not That Again. Under What Works list activities that come naturally, bring you joy, and ease into place. Under Not That Again list challenges. Jot down energy draining activities that bring you down. What changes will you make to delegate, dump, or modify the items in the Not That Again column and embrace more of what is in the What Works column?

2- Choose a theme that motivates you- What is most important this holiday? Base your theme on that. If you want to cut out traveling consider "Home for the Holidays". If your budget is tight ponder "Simply Sensational". Your theme keeps you focused. One that honors your spirituality could be "Faith and Family First". Or choose a favorite quote such as Mahatma Gandhi's "Be the Change You Wish to see in the World". Be creative, have fun, and write it down.

3- Set your top 4 priorities- Base them on what you really want which connects with your theme. Get crystal clear. Write them down. When you know your priorities you are able to respond easily to a request and set boundaries. When someone asks you to get involved look at your priorities and see if it serves them. If it does, consider it. If not, the answer is likely no.

4- Create a Map- If you took a big trip without planning you would likely get lost, waste time, and experience anxiety. It makes sense to plan at the holidays when so many areas of our lives are affected: time, energy, personal care, relationships, physical environment, and finances. Consider creating a task list thru the end of the year. It takes a block of time but saves time and stress. It will rescue you from running in circles, going back and forth to the same place, and trying to remember what is next. In the past I have had hundreds of items on my task list. No wonder we get stressed when we attempt to keep it in our heads.

Here's a tool to help. Pick up a holiday task list at the website below or create your own. On your computer create a chart with 4 columns. Use your theme for the header. Under your theme list your priorities horizontally. Label the columns in a way that is helpful to you. I use Business, Personal, Holiday, and Need List. Use small font and minimal margin space to fit as many rows as possible. Print your map. List your tasks and add on as they come to you. Keep your map with you at all times. Schedule blocks of time to carry out the tasks. Have fun and build momentum as you make progress. Remember to save it for next year.

5- Simplify- Every task must be handled. You can do it, delegate it, or dump it. Eliminate what does not serve your priorities. What can you get help on? Get rid of those items on your Not That Again list. Hire out when possible. Ask guests to bring a dish instead of you doing it all. Get your family involved and remember that things do not have to be perfect. Let go! This will give you the freedom to embrace what you truly enjoy this season.

6- Set a budget- Develop a budget that feels good. There are lots of ways to have a special holiday without adding stress to the budget. Show people they are appreciated. Plan family fun and activities. Let someone know what is special about them in a card, letter, cassette, or video. Be creative. Hide gifts, wrap up boxes with little clues inside, and let the kids have a scavenger hunt. Don't let a tight budget steal your joy. Make it fun and begin 2007 stress-free.

7- Set boundaries- Decide now what you will not tolerate. Write it down. Remember your Not That Again list? Is there someone who ropes you into things you don't want to do? Have the conversation that is overdue. Be compassionate, and no is no. If someone keeps asking after you have said no they are trying to control you. Setting boundaries is about educating others on how they can treat you. Is there someone you need to educate?

8- Schedule time for planning and yourself- When is a good time to update your plan? When can you take time for you? Put it on your calendar each week thru the end of the year. Keep the appointments. Add this line to your day timer as a reminder: "I have an appointment in honor of myself this _____ (day) at ___:___ (time) to do something special for me because I soooooo deserve it!"

9- Give in a way that gives you joy vs. obligation- When you give in a way that comes naturally, you stay authentic to yourself. Thereby, you are able to share your own special gifts with others. When you are doing what you love, life clicks. If there is a situation you are dreading, think about how you can tweak it to handle it in a way that would bring you more joy.

10- Take action now- Begin today so that you are tying up your last bows well before the pitter patter of hoofs on the rooftop. Keep your holiday journal and map close at hand. The sooner you complete your tasks, the sooner you can prop your feet up, sip your favorite hot beverage, and enjoy the atmosphere you created this season!

What I want for you is to take the first step...Starting Now!

Please send your thoughts and comments. I would love to hear from you. Copyright 2002 (Revised 2006), Beth A. Tabak. All rights reserved.

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About the Author

Beth Tabak of www.StartingNowCoaching.com is 100% committed to small business coaching & personal life coaching. She is also a speaker and columnist. Beth coaches big thinkers to be unlimited, stand out in the crowd, and experience the vastness of their capabilities. Come see all that is available to you and say "hello".