

Simplify Your Holidays

By Allison Carter

I urge everyone to consider simplifying the craziness in the winter season in any way they can this year. Many families are truly pushed to their limits trying to do too much and spend too much. If you try just one of these each year, you will find your holidays may not be as stressful.

10 Ways you can simplify this year.

1. Cut your gift list in half - only give to your closest friends and relatives
2. Give to charitable causes in the person's name. Many charities take donations on-line saving you a stamp as well.
3. Keep an idea list all year long. When someone mentions something they like, write it down. Keep it in your day planner, or at home with your family calendar.
4. Make a list of everyone and their sizes - Shirt, pants, shoes. Have your list with you when shopping.
5. Develop an overall plan - Will you buy a few gifts each month as you find them, or will you do a few big shopping days and pick up something for everyone on your list.
6. Making Gifts - you and your children can do crafts, cook, or make service "coupons" as gifts. Who wouldn't like a handmade item. They often mean more, and cost less.
7. Give Generically - if you see something good for a teacher, buy it for all of your children's teachers.
8. Say "NO" at least once when someone invites you to attend a holiday party. That is if you always feel over scheduled. People understand if you tell them the truth - that you're over scheduled and need some "down" time. If you really do want to see them, agree to get together in January.
9. Use plain paper to wrap presents and let the kids decorate it with markers, stamps, etc. You won't maintain a supply for every event. Just have 2 good rolls of brown or white paper and decorate for birthdays, holidays, graduation, etc.
10. Make a date to spend the day enjoying your family. Drop the hustle and bustle for just a day and make cookies or latkes, decorate the house, wrap someone else's presents together.