



## Holiday Survival Tips

The holidays seem more stressful than other times of the year. How come? I am convinced that people allow themselves to be stressed by their perceived expectations from others and the symbolic rush of completing the year. Here are ten ways to take back control, time, and maybe even part of your sanity.

- **Purchase “consumable gifts”.**  
Gift certificates, gifts of your time, buy items in bulk that can be parceled out for various people (personal or business recipients).
- **Tap your outside resources.**  
Hire baby sitters in the neighborhood so you can shop or plan (or even stay in another part of the house working), teenagers may be able to run errands for you.
- **Delegate to your family visitors.**  
Each person brings one thing for the meal. That means they bring dish and take it home. Saving you the clean-up.
- **Cook big and freeze.**  
Instead of one casserole for dinner tonight, double it and divide the second one into four individual servings in the freezer for later.
- **“Pack it up”.**  
Use stores to wrap gifts and ship them for you. Never bring the gift home. Use store gift registries, even on-line, to choose your gifts to save travel time to the store.
- **Divide and conquer decorations.**  
After the holidays, repack decorations into containers by room, so they are ready to easily unpack next year.
- **Draw the line on spending.**  
Money makes people nuts, put that issue aside. Set clear limits on gift costs or even restrict where everyone has to buy gifts.
- **Make a “break date”.**  
Call a friend today and set a non-negotiable time for coffee or lunch during the holiday. That time is specifically set aside without phones as “time off” for you.

- **Just say “no”.**  
Decide what you are NOT going to do this holiday. No holiday parties the week before Christmas? No end of the year business newsletter? Who says you have to do everything?
- **Learn from the past.**  
Keep records of what you do this year (How many dozen cookies for the office? Where did you buy the best Poinsettias?) Keep the information on file and streamline the holidays next year.
- **Set “task times”.**  
My clients get more done when they schedule a set time to do a task. They are forced to be more productive. Set a hard start and stop time for work; have an office mate remind you and make you turn off the light and go home.
- **Energize e-mail:**  
Vow to read e-mails only once and while the e-mail is open, write your “action” step in the subject line, close it, and the reminder stays with the note.
- **Turn off your Blackberry, TREO, PALM, iPhone or other device.**  
Really. Pick some times and turn it off.