

I survived the holidays! Now what?

The Holidays. Reading those words I feel my heart flutter in excitement and my stomach drop to my knees. As a mom to three girls, the holiday season in our house begins early, stretching from October through January. There are fall festivals to attend, apples to pick, pumpkins to carve, costumes to choose, Thanksgiving food to cook, shopping and decorating to complete, Christmas gatherings to attend...I could keep going but my blood pressure is already spiking and it is still 90 degrees outside at the moment. The holiday season is undeniably stressful but over the years I have compiled several tactics to not just survive the holidays, but to thrive in the days that follow.

DECLUTTER

Although it varies each year, I carve out a day to de-deck the halls. My girls and I will bake cookies as we gingerly pack away ornaments, take out the tree, and remove all traces of red and green. Last year I felt the pull to keep a little whimsy out as we ushered in the new year. I kept a strand of white twinkle lights on the mantle beside a simple evergreen arrangement. I lit a candle appropriately called 'Winter Sweater' and replaced the Christmas throw pillows with different textures of whites and grays. Something about a clean space and a neutral palette, coupled with a cozy blanket by the gentle hush of a roaring fire, ignites my soul for a fresh start.

I also dedicate one day to put away all the Christmas gifts. Unboxing the toys, hanging new clothes, basically putting everything in its proper place. During the week following Christmas I don't mind dodging princess dolls and play-doh, or seeing piles upon piles of clothes in my teenager's room. But I prefer to roll into the next year with some kind of order in the entire house. (Maybe this is a good time to also pay a house cleaner if the task of putting away gifts AND cleaning is overwhelming.)

RETREAT

After months of planning and coordinating with a double fist of Red Bull, I am more than ready to unplug and create some space just for me. There is no shame in a recalibration before beginning a new year! This is the perfect time to schedule self-care appointments in the form of a massage, an appointment at the salon, or even something as simple as a nap. I prefer to get in a hot yoga session or a good workout at my gym to get endorphins flowing, and to get my mind in a healthy headspace.

I also like to evaluate my rhythms for the next year, reflect on what worked and didn't work for our family during the previous year. For example, would meal planning and grocery pickup orders help save time (and my sanity) during our most hectic weeks instead of trying to cook a new recipe on busy weeknights? I also have jumped on the trend of choosing a word for the upcoming year. I keep a running list of previous years' words in the notes app of my iPhone and throughout the year, I like to note anything remarkable that is happening. 2021 was the year to

'Rebuild', which proved to be timely as our family started the year in a new home while still working out the kinks of e-learning and enduring a pandemic.

RESUME

Now that my head and my home feel somewhat back in order, I am in a good position to resume all the things I pressed pause for during the busy holiday season. This is a good time to schedule the kid's well-child visits and dentist appointments, update my calendar, as well as catch up on car maintenance, thank-you notes, or errands. Maybe this is a good time to spend gift cards I received for Christmas or return/exchange any items my kids received as gifts. As time-consuming as it can be, this is also when I like to organize my digital photos and create albums or memory books of the previous year's highlights. Additionally, I use this period of reawakening to set goals with my husband. This typically entails discussions of potential vacation dates/locations or big ticket purchases we need to make. I am definitely a Type A personality so this family meeting really helps to flesh out all the ideas we have held in our minds that may not have made the priority list during the holiday season.

Last but not least, this is the perfect time to serve my own family unit. After months of logistical planning across multiple family events, some downtime with my people is long overdue. Compiling a list of everyone's favorite menu items, I like to make a big dinner for us to enjoy around the table followed by watching a movie together, with everyone piled up on our bed and snuggled in close. Other times we order takeout from our favorite local restaurant and play hours of board games and card games. No rules, just family fun!

Holidays can be the most wonderful, yet most tense months of the year. The stress and burnout that sometimes follow is a lot to take on. While some of these tools may not be appropriate for everyone's season in life, hopefully they can help reset other homes and hearts. Cheers to a new year, where all is calm and all is bright!