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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

A HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER

Parenting from the Heart

Teaching children to give

**Nine Seasonal
Survival Tips**



3 **A Holiday to Remember**
Neighborhood relief

4 **10 Ways to Experience Holiday Joy**

6 **What Are You Thankful For?**
A gratitude contest

7 **Parenting from the Heart**
Teaching children to give

8 **Be a Friend**
During the holidays and anytime

10 **Nine Seasonal Survival Tips**

11 **Reaching Out to the Lonely**

12 **Notable Quotes**
The greatest gifts

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The end-of-the-year holiday season is here again, and like many, I've been making plans for this special time of the year. I'll have some time off work, and I look forward to spending most of it with my family. The togetherness we experience as we cook, eat, relax, and play together is my idea of a perfect holiday.

Of course, everyone has their own preferences, and what's enjoyable for one may not work for someone else.

Sometimes circumstances can be difficult. Maybe there are health or financial problems, or the world around us has been turned upside down due to conflict or natural disaster. Going into the holidays while experiencing something like that can be tough.

In this issue of *Motivated* I included a variety of articles that I hope will bring some joy and encouragement to everyone—those who live in peace and those in turmoil, those who have abundance, and those who are in want, those who enjoy good health and those who do not. It is my way of reaching out to you and sharing some holiday cheer with you—in the hopes that you in turn will give a little “lift” to someone else.

If we each do our part, it will not only bring more joy to our own lives, but we may hear a lot more people say, “This was my idea of a great holiday!”

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

A Holiday to Remember

Neighborhood relief

By Dan Rather, CBS News Anchor, adapted

It was the mid-1930s; we were in the teeth of the Great Depression. My family lived in a neighborhood that might be called “transitional” today, but in that more direct time was simply poor. Those who had work—and not many did—tended to be laborers. I cannot recall any local man who did not have calluses on his hands. My father did have a job.

One day I overheard him and my uncle talking about a family in the neighborhood who had no income—and no money. They also had no “relief,” which was the word in those days for welfare. What they did have was a house full of kids where the rent was always past due.

My father and Uncle John talked, and then set off in opposite directions. Each went to see people in the neighborhood whom they thought might be able to contribute something to help this family.

It was Christmas Eve. And before the day was out, they had gathered some toys and a little money, mostly in silver and copper, to help bring some kind of holiday to a family that had so little.

I think you can guess what I learned that day, as I saw people who themselves did not have much find something to give to those who had even less. ■



10 Ways to Experience Holiday Joy

By Laine Bergeson, adapted

If you want to enjoy some genuine joie de vivre during this, or any holiday season or celebration, keep in mind that the simplest acts of generosity, connection, and self-care can offer the biggest rewards. It all starts with reconnecting to the moments that mean the most to you, and making sure you have time to fully experience their magic.

If it's been a while since you dreamed up things to do just for the fun of it—either during the holidays or any time of year—here are some ideas to get you started. Use this list as a jumping-off point for your own joyful brainstorm.

1. Put it on paper.

Clear your schedule and dedicate one whole day (or part of a day) to writing holiday cards. The rewards of sending and receiving a personalized note are so much greater than a tossed-off impersonal one (think of your own disappointment when you slice open an envelope to find the only personal connection on the holiday card is a signature)

2. Make gifts instead of buying.

This is the three-dimensional equivalent of the hand-written note. You don't have to go to great lengths: Make homemade granola and package it in a classic glass jar. Buy an inexpensive set of glass spice shakers and fill them with the basil you dried from your garden this past summer. Look online for some simple instructions for making holiday ornaments, and then piece a few together, find a way to personalize them, and distribute to friends, family or coworkers.

3. Tackle your to-do list together.

Some extra shopping and holiday-related errand running is probably inevitable to prepare for your holiday. Improve the experience by going with a close friend. You can both cross off items from your to-do list while you reconnect. Consider doing the gift-wrapping and decorating with a friend or partner, too.

4. **Donate to a good cause.**

A spate of recent research has shown that charitable giving brings people more authentic happiness than any other type of spending. Make a donation to a cause that is personally meaningful to you—the environment, less fortunate people, humanitarian groups, research organizations, anything that makes your heart sing. Or donate in the names of friends and families in lieu of exchanging gifts.

5. **Adopt a family.**

Do you know of a less fortunate family in your neighborhood? Adopt a family and supply some gifts and special occasion dinners for needy families in your area. This is a great way for you and your family (especially kids and teenagers) to feel the profound joy of giving back. It's a transformative experience to actively participate in helping another family.

6. **Surprise a stranger.**

Acts of generosity don't have to be big or preplanned to be gratifying. Surprise the person by paying for their restaurant meal, or pay a cinema ticket for someone. Give a meal to a beggar on the street, or pay the bus fare or the freeway toll of the person boarding or driving behind you. Spontaneity and surprise can amplify the joy of the gift, for both giver and receiver.

7. **Modify your rituals or create meaningful new ones.**

Do you always go to your parents' house for dinner on special occasions? Does your sister's family always come to your place on New Year's Day? Consider switching things around this year. Go to your in-laws instead of

hosting, or meet the extended family at a nice restaurant so no one has to cook or clean up. Novel locations and new routines can give longstanding traditions a much-needed shake-up and create delightful holiday moments.

8. **Have a classic movie night.**

Whether you're a sucker for seasonal movies or not, grab a couple of your favorite films, turn off all the lights, light a few candles, and have a holiday movie marathon. (If you detest holiday films, grab some of your all-time favorites, no matter the genre. As long as you love it, it counts.)

9. **Play some in-person games.**

Before computer games and smart phone game apps, there were fun board and card games played with real live humans around the real-world dining room table. There was talking! Interaction! Laughter! Food! Friendly competition! Grab your kids, spouse, neighbors, friends, and extended family, and resurrect this joyful tradition.

10. **Be kind to yourself.**

Yes, preparing for any special occasion can be a busy time. But when you take care of your body, mind and spirit—making sure you're well nourished, hydrated, rested and sane—you'll be better able to handle the intensity, and you'll be a lot more fun to be around. Make time for self-care—exercise, meditation, and a few hours of quiet downtime. Showing up calm, happy, and open-hearted for festivities (even if every last little thing didn't get done) is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and others any time of the year. ■

What Are You Thankful For?

A gratitude contest



In 2012, there was an on-line contest with a \$100 reward for the best answer to the question, “What are you thankful for?” I scrolled down the 87 comments that were posted. I was not surprised to find that most comments included gratitude for family, friends, and good health. But then there were those that were different and stood out. Here are some I found share-worthy and thought provoking:

I’m thankful for so much—every time I see a puddle in the street, I’m thankful to our town council for neglecting to fix it so that birds and strays can have a drink of water. I’m thankful for the rays of sunshine warming the homeless during the winter months, and for every breath I painlessly take. I thank God for putting us up with us.—Chrystall Antoniadou

I’m most grateful to be surrounded by such unconditional love and friendship. Up until now, I’ve been enduring chronic pain from a work injury, which cost me a dream job but has led me to new-found love and utter possibilities. Without having suffered such pain, I never would have moved or met the love of my life, found a place to call home, in the literal sense, versus being a wandering gypsy, gallivanting and having world

adventures. I’m so forever thankful each day that pain has led me to a place of being grounded. It has made me more empathetic, loving, and most humbled and grateful. The conclusion is LOVE. With that, everything else that should matter will come.—S. Daniels

Life! As a woman fighting cancer, I’m thankful for my life and whatever life looks like when I’m finished. That includes all the people in it—my family, my husband, my caretakers, my amazing friends, my colleagues and clients, and all the people who were strangers but have come into my life because of cancer. I’m thankful that I’m able to fight this disease and look beyond it to so many amazing blessings. I’m thankful to be here—right now!—April Boone

I am thankful for the simple things in life like clean air and clean water. I am thankful for my beautiful land that stole my heart away. I am thankful for the wondrousness and awe-inspiring ability of a star-filled night sky. I am thankful for being surrounded by people I love, being generally fortunate in life, and that I have been able to retain my childlike wonder of the world even during times of tragedy and despair. I am simply thankful that I have things to be thankful for.—Amanda ■

Teaching Children to Give

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



Adapted Web Reprint

It can be tough to teach children the value of giving in a season when they're surrounded by messages about the value of getting. Here are five ways to start:

Start small when the kids are small.

Your young child might be happy to help bake cookies for a friend but end up wanting to keep the gift herself. Plan for this by baking enough cookies to keep and enough cookies to give. Young children need help in learning to share.

Teach your child that he doesn't need money to give.

Help your child make gift certificates good for "one free car wash" or "breakfast in bed" that he can give to others in the family.

Involve your children in the gift-giving process.

Show your children how to make a gift list for their family, friends, and teachers.

Children love to spend time with you, so find a craft or kitchen project that will allow you to make these gifts together. They will learn the pride of creating something with their own hands to give, and the delight of seeing the recipients' faces light up.

Out with the old, in with the new.

Because they're going to get lots of new toys, explain to your children that we have to make room for them by clearing out some of their older toys. Explain that donating some of their toys helps make the holidays special for many families who are not able to buy gifts for their children. Then take your children with you to your nearest donation center that distributes toys and other items to families in need.

Be a role model.

Sharing the experience of giving can be the most rewarding present you give your child this holiday season. ■



BE A FRIEND

During the holidays and anytime

Adapted Web Reprint

There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.

—Thomas Aquinas



Being a good friend isn't always easy, but taking the time to nurture a lasting friendship is worth every ounce of effort. As the years pass, some people will stay by your side, but many won't, and you'll realize that each friendship you keep is priceless. Of course, to have a good friend, you must be one. Here are some tips on being a good friend, and deepening a friendship to make it last:

- You don't have to spend a lot of time and money to be a good friend. A phone call can mean as much as a visit.
- Enjoy one another's company. It's not all about bleeding hearts and advice to the lovelorn—or at least, it shouldn't be. Be sure to have fun together and do spontaneous activities now and then. Be a positive force in your friend's life.
- A friend who is only available at school or work is still a friend. Be very glad for that special kind of friendship associated with the place where you share time together.
- If your friend makes a promise and doesn't keep it then don't do the same to them or you will keep repeating the pattern.
- Don't set too many expectations and rules. Allow your friendship to evolve and change naturally.
- Don't try to be the same as your friend—differences are what make great friends. Plus, it can get irritating. Embrace your differences and be proud of them!
- Tell your friend how much you

appreciate their company and them being there for you when you needed them. It will brighten up their day and affirm your friendship.

- Honest communication is a basic foundation in a friendship. If you and your friend can't talk to each other freely, it can put hidden strain on the relationship.
- Be there for your friend during hard times.
- Don't worry so much about losing a friend, but appreciate the times that you have had with them, and the friendships you are still going to have!
- Offer your help in times of need, even if it's a bit hard for you to fit it in your busy schedule. Friends always like it when you offer to help, and at least try.
- Root for your friend! Congratulate him or her on something good, and mean it! If you are a little envious, express it. This can deepen the friendship. A true friend is there in bad times, holding you up, but also rooting for you during good times.
- Be honest about the reasons behind your actions. If you made a mistake, ask your friend to forgive you.
- If you're trustworthy your friends will rely on you, and you will get to know them more. It will strengthen your friendship.
- Always show your awareness of money spent on your behalf. Show your joyful willingness to give gas money, bring household goods, or a plate of food if they host often, etc. ■

Nine Seasonal Survival Tips

By Abi May, adapted

There are many fortunate people who enjoy the celebrations of holidays, relishing the break from work, savoring the culinary treats, treasuring happy memories or making new ones, and relaxing in the company of family and friends. But it's not like that for everyone. Holidays can be one of the most difficult times of the year for those suffering from depression.

Of course, the holidays themselves aren't the culprit, but the season's expectations can take a toll. Those who live alone or have recently lost a loved one may feel their isolation more acutely. Others may buckle under the financial stress and extra expense. Many well-meaning parents find themselves worn out from gift-buying, baking, and cleaning.

For the sake of all those who struggle, here are nine seasonal survival tips.

1. Schedule your time: Make a plan before any holiday event before it speeds up out of control. Schedule days for shopping, decorating, baking, and celebrating—and leave some time for the unexpected.

2. Budget your finances: Decide how much you can afford to spend, and stick within your limits. Be creative with gifts.

3. Celebrate within limits: Watch your diet. You don't have to accept every invitation or eat all of the chocolates in the box.

4. Press pause: A little argument can spoil an otherwise happy gathering. Take a deep breath. This too will pass.

5. Reach out: If you might be alone during a holiday, look for company by volunteering, inviting a neighbor, or organizing a potluck at a local community center.

6. Allow yourself to “be”: It might not be your “season to be jolly.” That's okay; there's a time for everything.

7. Try something new: Avoid some of the stress of previous holidays by doing things differently this year. For instance, eat out instead of cooking a big dinner; play board games instead of watching television; visit a friend instead of sitting at home alone.

8. Be kind to yourself: Most holidays are a time for giving, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't give a little time ... to yourself.

9. Look up: If there's any time to be reflecting on the goodness of God, it's during special holidays and celebrations. By taking some time to still ourselves, meditate, and look up, we can find inner peace. ■



Reaching Out to the Lonely

By Alan Smith

The story is told about a big-city policeman investigating a case. He made a phone call, but even before he finished dialing, he somehow knew he had made a mistake. He let it ring, though.

The phone rang once, twice—then someone picked it up. “You’ve got the wrong number!” a husky male voice snapped before the line went dead.

Mystified, the policeman dialed again.

“I said you got the wrong number!” the voice growled. Once more the phone clicked down.

The policeman asked himself, How could he possibly know I had the wrong number? A cop is trained to be curious—and concerned. So he dialed a third time.

“Hey, c’mon,” the voice said. “Is this you again?”

“Yeah, it’s me. I was wondering how you knew I had the wrong number before I even said anything.”

“You figure it out!” The phone slammed down.

The policeman sat there for a while, thinking. Then he called the man back.

“Did you figure it out yet?” the man

asked.

“The only thing I can think of is nobody ever calls you.”

“You got it!” The phone went dead for the fourth time.

Chuckling, the officer dialed the man back.

“What do you want now?” asked the man.

“I thought I’d call—just to say hello,” the policeman smiled into the phone.

“Hello? Why?”

“Well, if nobody ever calls you, I thought maybe I should.”

We live in a world of lonely people (many of them, ironically, surrounded by other lonely people). Sometimes, that loneliness expresses itself in gruffness and an apparent attempt to push people away. In reality, there’s an aching desire to know that someone truly cares, that someone loves them unconditionally, and that someone is willing to listen.

Let’s keep our eyes and ears open, and find what we can do this holiday season, and at any time, to pass on some unconditional love. ■

The Greatest Gifts

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present.—**Bill Keane**

The greatest gift of life is friendship, and I have received it.—**Hubert H. Humphrey**

God gave us the gift of life; it is up to us to give ourselves the gift of living well.—**Voltaire**

You take away all the other luxuries in life, and if you can make someone smile and laugh, you have given the most special gift: happiness.—**Brad Garrett**

We've got this gift of love, but love is like a precious plant. You can't just accept it and leave it in the cupboard or just think it's going to get on by itself. You've got to keep watering it. You've got to really look after it and nurture it.

—**John Lennon**

Every gift from a friend is a wish for your happiness.

—**Richard Bach**

What if you gave someone a gift, and they neglected to thank you for it—would you be likely to give them another? Life is the same way. In order to attract more of the blessings that life has to offer, you must truly appreciate what you already have.—**Ralph Marston**

It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere. But God did not promise us that the world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on earth. It is an awesome opportunity.—**Cesar Chavez**

Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.—**Buddha**

The greatest gift that you can give to others is the gift of unconditional love and acceptance.

—**Brian Tracy**

