

PRACTICAL TIPS TO CONSIDER – Taming Our Frantic Frustrations (Lesson 2)

Remember What’s Important

- Focus on the true meaning of the season. Too many people give lip service only. This is evident by the fact that unbelievers (people who don’t believe in Jesus Christ) celebrate Christmas! Remember the first Christmas was about glory to God (worship), peace and good will”.
- Keep the main thing the main thing. Christmas isn’t about Santa or elves or decorations.
- Remind yourself that what matters most is loved ones, not store-bought presents, elaborate decorations or gourmet food.
- Develop traditions, because they become the glue that holds family memories together.
- Don’t neglect prayer and devotion time just because you are busy. If Jesus is the reason for the season, why would we neglect Him? Celebrate His birthday like you do your own!

Practice Margin

- Set limits.
- Map out what is important.
- Describe how that looks in your life.
- Don’t let things of lesser importance erase those limits (For instance: Corporate worship is very important for a member of the body of Christ. Although a job is important, seek one that doesn’t interfere with your church schedule).

OTHER TIPS

- **Set Priorities** (*67% of us feel stressed by a “lack of time”*)
 - Set limits on time
 - Prioritize holiday obligations
 - Find shortcuts (Example: order online).
- **Be Willing to Let Things Go**
 - Some things are not necessities, just expectations (like Christmas cards).
 - Ask for help (with food, gift wrapping, decorating, etc.).
 - Delegate
- **Have Realistic Expectations**
 - No holiday celebration is perfect. If there is a misstep, be flexible (A lopsided tree or a burned pie won’t ruin your holiday – it will create a family memory).
 - If your children’s wish list is outside your budget, talk to them about realistic expectations and remind them that the holidays aren’t about expensive gifts.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- **Maintain Healthy Habits**
 - Eating – watch portions; include fruits and veggies.
 - Drink lots of water
 - Sleep – Seven hours make a difference on the brain and heart; don’t overeat before bed (Lack of sleep causes you to eat more).
- **Exercise**
 - Just 20 minutes a day is enough to make a difference in your heart, arteries, joints, bones and attitude.
- **Have Needed Conversations**
 - Regarding finances (see Lesson 1).
 - Let your family know that holidays are times to express gratitude, appreciation and give thanks for what you have, including each other.
 - Talk positively to others! Talking about how stressed you are and all the things that are going wrong only increases anxiety.
- **Seek Support**
 - Discuss your worries and concerns with pertinent close friends and family. Getting things out in the open can help reduce anxiety.

- **Breathe, Smile & Enjoy**

- Remember that you're only one person and can only accomplish certain things.
- Sometimes self-care is the best thing you can do – others will benefit when you're feeling less stressed.
- Reflect on aspects of your life that give you joy; go for a long walk; get a massage; take time to listen to your favorite music or read a new book.
- All of us need some time to recharge our batteries. Be mindful and focus on the present rather than dwell on the past or worry about the future.

KEEP YOUR SANITY WITH CHILDREN

(This section is from the blog "How to Enjoy the Holidays Like Your Kids Do" by Carla Naumburg)

- **Don't Expect a Norman Rockwell Scene**

- Accept the holidays for the good and the bad that happens. Christmas "bliss" normally lasts about five minutes before there is a fight over a toy, a burning smell from the kitchen, or a demand from a visiting relative.
- Whenever you notice yourself fantasizing about the perfect holiday, remember that you'll still be dealing with tantrums and nagging and all the other challenges of life with family (Children still need naps, etc.)
- Setting reasonable expectations will help you feel less disappointed and frustrated when reality doesn't fully match the picture in your head.

- **Hold Loosely to Your Plans**

- "Whenever I'm booking tickets or setting menus for holiday celebrations, I like to add my own twist to the old adage: We plan, God laughs – and kids vomit."
- Make plans, but be ready to let them go. Don't get so stuck on them that you can't enjoy the way the holiday actually unfolds.

- **Be Consistent When You Can**

- Staying up a little late, sleeping in and having holiday cookies for breakfast – these treats give you a break from the normal routine. They also teach your kids about flexibility and adaptability.
- In the midst of the holidays, stay true to the parts of your children's schedules that actually impact their ability to stay healthy and function reasonably well.
- Figure out what matters for your kid (food? nap? outside time? exercise?) and stick to it as much as you can.

- **Plan for Fun *and* Relaxation**

- It can be easy to add so much to the schedule that there's no time to enjoy what you are doing. Think about how you will balance busy days with much-needed downtime.

- **Give More Experiences and Fewer Presents**

- We all love presents, but they cost money and clutter our houses. Studies also show that the more stuff kids have, the less happily and creatively they play.
- Consider a trip to a Children's Museum or to a special place instead of giving them yet another toy that will likely keep their attention for less than ten minutes. You will enjoy the time together as much as the kids!

- **Establish Holiday Rituals with Your Kids**

- During the school break, try to be with your kids as much as possible. You'll find that you all enjoy the holidays a lot more.
- Read your favorite holiday story together.
- Bake cookies
- Work on a special holiday craft project (like a gingerbread house).