

Holiday Planning Tips For Busy Moms

By Aurelia M. Williams

Ahhh, the Holidays..... The Thanksgiving turkey comes out of the oven golden brown, with an enticing aroma that fills the entire house. All the china is in pristine condition and not a single piece in the set is missing. The family is gathered for holiday pictures, the children are poised perfectly; hands to themselves, not a hair out of place and their smiles are shining brightly for the camera. Then just as the photographer is about to capture the shot... you wake up!

Let's be realistic ladies. Without proper planning, the holidays are anything but a holiday. Just look at the list of things that need to be done: Shopping, cooking, cleaning, decorating, sending holiday mail, the list goes on and on. Let me clue you all in on a few key questions that you should ask yourself in order to have a holiday season free of stress and worry, and instead filled with fun and laughter:

What types of holiday celebrations do you want? For example: Do you want to have an immediate family only holiday affair or an extravaganza including immediate and extended family plus a few friends? Once you've thought everything through and decided on the type of holiday gathering you would like, you can then start making your plans. If you are ready to get a head start on organizing yourself, your family and your holiday check lists, then keep reading:

Holiday Cards: Start early! I use a holiday card list that I derive from saving names and addresses from holiday cards my family has received in past years. I created a simple, computerized list that is easy to edit and print onto address labels. Be sure to stock up on stamps so that when you have your cards signed, stuffed and addressed you can affix a stamp to them and make one, simple trip to the Post Office.

Holiday Gifts: There's nothing like getting a HUGE credit card bill in the mail at the start of the New Year. Many of us tend to want to be generous when shopping for holiday gifts. While your generosity will be appreciated at gift giving time, keep in mind that it is very easy to succumb to "impulse buying" and go all out on your holiday shopping. While your intentions may be good, your pocketbook may be singing a different song. Set a budget and stick to it – your bank account will thank you for it after the start of the New Year.

Wrap it up: Wrap your gifts and place nametags on them immediately after you bring them home, then store the gifts in a secure spot. This will cut down on those late night wrapping sessions that I am sure we ALL have experienced a few times, if not every year.

Baking & cooking: If you will be cooking during the holidays, it is important to plan your meals ahead of time. Be sure to stock up ahead of time on all the necessary non-perishable baking ingredients such as flour, sugar and spices. Create a list of your holiday menus and a list of the ingredients you will need to prepare each of those meals. Also, try to think of a few dishes that can be prepared ahead of time and then frozen as an extra timesaving measure

Delegate: This is one of my favorite tips. Be sure to enlist the help of your family or friends. Sit down and discuss what needs to be done then ask for volunteers. If no hands are raised, simply assign small tasks to each of them. Whether it is arranging for a babysitter so that you can escape for a child free day of shopping, passing the shopping list onto another family member or friend so that they can pick up the items for you, or letting the children decorate your home. Be sure to get the whole family involved in the holiday preparations so that you will not be overwhelmed.

Enjoy: Whatever you decide to do, remember to relax and enjoy yourself. You and your family will have much fonder memories of this holiday season if you are not spending it pulling your hair out.

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