

## **STRUCTURING TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

For many of us, the holiday season is oftentimes filled with frantic activity. No matter our spiritual or religious posture, the holidays can be a bit too much. We end up exhausted and dreading the holidays rather than being renewed and fulfilled by them.

Remember Eric Berne, the father of Transactional Analysis? Back in the early 60's he challenged us to consider how we structure or fill up our time. Daily we have many "forks in the road". Which path will we follow? Frantic holiday activity or a more leisurely, balanced approach? Here are some possibilities to enrich your holiday season.

### **Sitting Alone**

Take five minutes each day to sit alone in silence. Quiet your mind. Look around. Be still. Tune into your body. Observe what is happening with your mind. Allow your thoughts to float on by like a cloud in the sky. Be totally in the now. Be still and know. Read [The Power of Now](#) and [A New Earth](#) by Eckhardt Tolle.

### **Drive in Quiet**

How do we structure our time while driving our vehicles? Very likely we listen to talk radio, audio books, music or talk on our blue tooth telephones. Try driving in silence. Focus on your breathing. Be 100% present to your driving. Stay observational. Calm yourself. Renew yourself by staying outside the insane behaviors we witness from other drivers. Arrive refreshed. Avoid stress! Enjoy! Remember the words of Hamilton Wright Mabie, "Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."

### **Remembering**

Take time to be still, remembering pleasant holiday memories. Generally, our being still is a necessary prerequisite for the memories to float up into conscious awareness. If you are flooded with unpleasant memories, rather than fleeing from them, take the time to face them, come to terms with them and be finished with them.

Remember that before Christ, Buddha, Moses or Mohammed, humans have employed the winter months as a time to renew their spirits. We are wise to continue that tradition by savoring our memories of holiday pageants and concerts, going caroling and sledding, gathering with family before a fireplace or a Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. What would our lives be without the lights, sights, sounds and traditions of our holiday season?

## **Visualizing**

Start now to plan and visualize this holiday season. Write down on your calendar time to rest and remember. Balance activities and times to restore yourself. Take time to tune into yourself and be a friend to yourself. Without planning and committing yourself to scheduling time for renewing yourself, it probably will not happen.

Visualize creating holiday memories/traditions with your grandkids, nieces and nephews. Baking cookies together. Sawing down a live Christmas tree. Remembering where each ornament came from while decorating the tree together. Attending a holiday concert. Seeing Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" again or The Nutcracker Ballet. My favorite is listening to peaceful Christmas music while gazing on our lighted Christmas tree with the other house lights off.

## **Joy in Giving**

Some say that the surest route to soothing our own pain is to help out someone else. During the holidays the therapeutic benefits of giving to others seem to be heightened. We see children's faces light up when receiving toys that spark unbridled joy. Delivering meals to the homebound or serving the homeless in a soup kitchen brings solid fulfillment. I remember Bob Hope saying, "If you haven't got charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble." My dentist told me earlier this morning that, "tomorrow isn't promised to us."

## **Relationships**

We all seem to have some level of ambivalence about intimacy, whether it's intimacy with ourselves or with others. Too often we are running away from ourselves and others. Yet, at the same time, we find incredible, wonderful solace in being okay with ourselves and others. In The Art of Loving, Erik Fromm says we are all saddled with separateness, yet we yearn to overcome it, overcome our aloneness.

Let's use this holiday season to structure our time so we develop soothing, enriching relationships with ourselves and with each other. Being frantic and overwhelmed is draining and deadening.

P.S. A special thanks to dear friends, Jack and Susan Christensen who provided wisdom, content and inspiration for this article.

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