

# ORGANIZED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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by Sarah Whisenant

As a kid, I couldn't wait until December--a month of presents, festivities and family time. As an adult, the season is more likely to be synonymous with stress. Just this week, several friends have expressed their dread: "I feel like a Grinch this year" and "ugh, I don't want to think about Christmas cards."



Invite a more peaceful spirit with these four tips. Yes, you'll have to pare down, prioritize and simplify (read: you won't be a one-woman crafting/baking extravaganza). However, the days will feel calmer, you'll enjoy what's on your list more, and you may look forward to December next year.

## **Rotate Traditions:**

Several years ago I realized I couldn't keep up with our many traditions: putting up outdoor lights, celebrating Advent (the four Sundays before Christmas), writing cards, finding just the right gifts, and baking pulla (a special Finnish holiday bread). So I began to rotate them. One year our family puts up outdoor lights and makes wreaths from fresh greens. The next year we skip the lights and wreaths but invite friends to celebrate Advent with dessert and singing. If the thought of sending out cards overwhelms me, I purchase a box for my relatives, and mail just a few. Scaling back means the traditions we choose each year are fun, memorable, and meaningful.

## **Say No:**

You've heard this advice a million times, but think you're above it. Think again. Saying yes to all the activities, parties, traditions, crafts, from-scratch recipes, and decorations means long days, late nights, and finally, complete exhaustion. Instead, weigh each obligation and holiday project carefully before committing to it.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Will this activity provide a fun memory?
- Will it benefit our family?
- How will it fit into our schedule?
- Are there hidden costs, tasks, time commitments associated with saying yes?

By saying yes to one invitation, you're likely saying no to another. If attending the candlelight sing-along in your town square is important, don't jam-pack the day with other demands. Make one activity a priority, allow adequate time to arrive and enjoy it, and cross another to-do off your list.



### **De-clutter Your Decor:**

Each year, when boxes of holiday decorations emerge from the attic, back closet, or basement, sort through the crates with the intent of discarding a few pieces. If you don't love a figurine or ornament, or it no longer fits your style, put it in the to-go pile. It's fine to keep a few sentimental items, but remember that your decorations should be a joy, not a burden. Costly items can be resold or given to a friend who would appreciate them. When your holiday home is filled with keepsakes you cherish, you'll enjoy the season more.

### **Book A Babysitter:**

Whether it's for a day of shopping or your neighbor's yearly soiree, recognize that December is a hectic time for babysitters too, and give yours plenty of notice. Consider getting a bit of extra help to make your month more manageable, whether that means trading babysitting with a friend, asking your Mom to drop in for the afternoon, or having your husband take a few hours off of work. It's amazing how much you can accomplish

without kids in tow.

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