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Wednesday, December 2, 2015

Hello reader, here is my newsletter.



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Ah December! Earlier than ever, the Christmas lights and Christmas trees are in stores: why not speak of the holiday season!

I am constantly surprised by holiday season burnouts. All I hear when I listen to people talk about this time of year is, "I must go, I cannot say no, I have to accept, I have to see everyone, I have to be fair between my family, his family, the divorced father, divorced mother, etc." The obligations that we put on our shoulders are amazing and the level of "emotional blackmail" we tolerate because it's the holiday season is just inconceivable.

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## Imagine the following:

You are a married mother and you have three children. Your parents are divorced. Your father lives in Quebec with his new wife, your mother lives in Chicoutimi with her new husband. The parents of your spouse are separated; one lives in Montreal and one in Sherbrooke. And you, you live in Candiac. You arrive at December 24th, exhausted after six weeks of rush at the office. Your kids have just finished being sick with the flu. Everyone is tired. During this “vacation” period, you have negotiated with the whole family where you were going to be during the holidays. You assume, like every year, that you had to see everyone. And then the hopping from place to place begins and the stress starts. The 24th at the stepmother’s in Montreal. The 25th in Sherbrooke. Your mother is not happy not to see you at Christmas, so you negotiate to spend three days in Chicoutimi around the New Year. So on Dec 30th you go to Chicoutimi for 3 days, then on the 2nd, it’s your Father in Quebec. You return to Montreal late on January 2nd or mid day in January 3rd, exhausted and fed up. You have 2 days to get ready for work and you hope that no one gets sick after all this kissing and hugging. Imagine if on top of that you were separated!

I know, I'm exaggerating, and it's on purpose. However, I know two couples that are very close to this scenario. And I have not even talked about buying gifts, the Christmas tree, decorations and making the donuts and the homemade meat pies!

Most of us consider that time very negatively. How to improve this difficult time? Let me share with you what I have done to enjoy the holidays. First, sit down and think about what you be your best holiday season ever. Then do it!



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Several years ago, I learned to say "no." I say "no" more than I say "yes". I only see people who mean the world to me. Then, I cut down in giving gifts and I start to buy them in November. And I do a lot of my shopping on the Internet. I do not particularly like shopping, even in normal times.

Then I schedule what I want to do and I focus on quality and not quantity. Christmas eve is now dedicated to me and my spouse (I do not have children), the 25th is reserved for the most important person for me or my spouse (mothers). So instead of attending endless parties where we don't have time to really talk to anyone and where people fight, I prefer to choose more private settings with people I really like. And I never do that in December or early January. For several years now, we even go south right after Christmas. It's very relaxing.

**So here's a summary of some tips to improve the holiday season:**

- Say no to some invitations. Negotiate some more private dinners at other times.
- Start buying gifts in November and finish it all no later than 15 December.
- Allow time for you, your spouse and your children.

- Review the list of people to whom you give gifts. For large families, a draw would be more economical.
- Keep up with your exercises; it reduces stress.
- Remember to focus on quality instead of quantity.

*Wishing you a good preparation holidays.*

Sophie



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*"When we can no longer change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves".*

VIKTOR FRANKL