

How to Enjoy a Chaos-Free Christmas

The Short Version:

Want to know the magical way to avoid chaos and undue stress? Make a P.L.A.N.!

Planning puts YOU in the driver's seat and allows you to have more control over your time, as opposed to time slipping away with much left to be done.

Rushing = Stressing!

- **P** — Plan it and put it down on paper/calendar
- **L** — List everything you think must be done for you and your family to enjoy a blessed holiday season
- **A** — Ask for help and delegate, delegate, delegate!!
- **N** — Notice how much more you enjoy the holidays with a well-executed plan!

The Long Version:

1. What is your vision for the holidays? Dream it up and WRITE IT DOWN in a story format or in bullet points. The faintest ink is better than the best memory. :)
2. Thanksgiving is ONE day, not the entire month of November! Christmas is ONE day, not the entire month of December! Even if you have multiple celebrations, keep them in perspective.
3. It is imperative that you write down everything you like to do that is important to you or your family. Have an honest conversation about what your expectations are (Do the cookies have to be made from scratch? Can we buy a pie? What if everyone brings a dish?) There are no right or wrong answers! You and your family decide what is necessary to do and what things can be delegated or let go.
4. Once you have your detailed list (I have provided the beginning of an outline for you on the following pages), put the tasks on your calendar, even estimating how much time will be required. I recommend you estimate on the high side of time required, so if it takes a little longer to get it done than you expected, you're covered. And if you finish early, you can enjoy a few minutes of quiet, applauding yourself for checking that task off your list.
5. Determine who will handle each task. For example, if you are the only person who can do a task (or if you want to because it brings you pleasure), write "Me" next to it. However, remember that most tasks can be delegated. Discuss with your family who can handle which tasks and when and then put it on the calendar. And sharing the tasks equals sharing the joy.
6. Clump together similar activities. Gift purchasing is one of my favorites to complete as quickly and painlessly as possible! Again, make out a list of who you need to buy for and schedule a few hours on the computer or an afternoon at the mall to knock out all your shopping at once. Baking is another thing you can take care of in an afternoon. Prepare your baked goods ahead of when you need them, and freeze them! When you pull them out — voila! — you have "fresh baked" goodies to share! I find when you group your tasks this way, you will lessen the stress you feel and save a lot of time and money.

Your P.L.A.N. for a Chaos-free Holiday Season

TASK	Who's going to do it	Date Complete
Decorating your home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		
Menu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • 		
Holiday greeting cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind? • Order them • Address list • Buy stamps/mail 		
Functions to attend/Special Outings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • 	Place	Date
Volunteering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	Place	Date

TASK	Who's going to do it	Date Complete
<p>Gift Shopping or Making Gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of who to buy for • Gift you plan to give • Shopping or making day! 		
<p>Wrapping Gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrapping paper/bows bought • Tape, scissors & space to do it • Wrapping day! 		
<p>Making/Baking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What? • For whom/what? • Ingredients shopped • Making/Baking day! 		
<p>Travel Arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to • Packing suitcases (and/or Car) • Flights booked 		
<p>After the Event Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash the dishes/take out trash • Take down tree • Put away decorations • Straighten home • Thank you notes • Toast your successful holidays! 		

Napoleon Hill: *"Plan your work and work your plan."*