

5 Clear, Simple Steps to Help You Simplify the Holidays

With Thanksgiving officially kicking off the beginning of the holiday (and eating) season, the Society of Happy People has released their free *5 Steps to Simplify Your Holidays* guide to help people navigate this hectic time of year.

Between choosing the perfect gifts, baking the perfect seasonal treats and creating the perfect home ambiance, it's no wonder that people feel especially stressed between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Recent studies suggest that those feelings may be more common than we may have believed, as evinced by a "Beating the Holiday Burn" survey commissioned by Perrigo Company PLC last year that revealed that an alarming 88% of Americans 18 and older feel stressed during the holidays.

To keep you smiling over the next few weeks, here are the top five ways to simplify your holidays:

1. Get organized. While plans will certainly flux along the way, the more organized you are up front, the happier you'll be—and the more energy you'll have to enjoy the holidays. Get a big master calendar to write down everyone's schedule in a different color, or use a planning app to accomplish the same objective. Encourage all family members to share planned parties, lunches, appointments and travel itineraries. Layer in time for holiday decorating as well as time to put everything away. Buy tickets for holiday plays, musicals and religious events in advance.

2. Make shopping fun. Between long lines at the mall and trying to find the right items at the right prices, it comes as no surprise that 1 in 5 Americans dreads holiday gift shopping. Make a detailed list of everyone you need to buy

for—and next to each person's name, list possible items that you think they might like, along with a budget. If finances are tight, handmade gifts or framed photos of special moments are equally, if not more, appreciated. Having a game plan and a monetary limit will help keep spending in line—and anxiety at bay.

3. Determine your holiday meals. The phrase “menu planning” is particularly relevant this time of year. If you're hosting, decide what dishes you're going to make and consider assigning some of those to others. Figure out if you need any specific cookware and serving pieces, as well as floral arrangements, placemats and other decorations. If you're not cooking, make reservations at your favorite restaurant or place your catering order. And if you're going to bring a new dish to someone else's house, do a dry run of the recipe beforehand.

4. Create your holiday greetings. Determine whether you'll be going with traditional cards, photo cards or email newsletters, and then select or make your format of choice. Buy holiday stamps and check your mailing list to make sure it's up to date. Address a few envelopes each day to make the task less overwhelming, especially if you're adding personal messages. If you're thinking about creating a video, enlist the help of family members to make it warm and meaningful, and consider hiring an editor to polish up the finished product.

5. Wrap it up. If you didn't buy gift wrap during last year's after-Christmas sales, purchase paper, bags, tape and other supplies now (dollar stores and warehouse big-box stores tend to have good inventory at great prices). When you're ready to start wrapping, make it fun by sipping on a glass of wine, cup of hot cocoa or glass of egg nog while listening to holiday music or your favorite seasonal movie. And there's nothing that says you have to do it all in one day—consider wrapping for a few family members at a time to make the job less onerous.

“The most important part of the holidays are the memories you make with your family and friends,” said Pamela Gail Johnson, founder of the Society of Happy People. “All the hoopla may make things look festive, but that’s not what people will remember in the years to come. So, don’t exhaust yourself trying to create the perfect holiday—just show up and share your happy holiday self!”

For a free copy of the *5 Steps to Simplify Your Holiday Guide*, visit .

The Society of Happy People has thousands of happy members in 45 countries around the world. To become a member or to learn more about their 20th annual Happiness Happens Month, visit .
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About the Society of Happy People: Founded on Aug. 8, 1989, by Pamela Gail Johnson as the Secret Society of Happy People, the since-renamed Society of Happy People is a group of people that celebrates being happy, focuses on making the world a better place by sharing uplifting news and helps others find more happiness.