

Planning for Holidays – All year long

The Holiday season can be a time filled with stress, anxiety, and even depression. This year start thinking about holiday plans well before the season of cheer! Here are some tips to get you thinking ahead of time:

January thru June

- After the Holidays, hit the clearance sales to pick up any supplies you'll want for the following year. This is a great time to make larger purchases such as artificial Christmas trees.
- Set up a Holiday savings account. Put any extra cash you have into this account and avoid paying all of those credit card bills after the holidays.
- Start looking for gifts on-line or in mail-order catalogs. Mark the page and keep it on hand when you're ready to buy.
- Schedule a day to take a family photo outside. Use these photos later for holiday cards or as gifts.

July thru September

- While you're on vacation, look for unusual gifts for those hard-to-buy for people on your list. If you find one great gift, buy several to give to different friends or relatives.
- Want to start the tradition with extended family members of drawing names for gift giving? Suggest this change now so family members can plan and budget accordingly. Set a time to draw names.
- Start talking about holiday travel plans. His family or yours? Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? Drive or Fly? Buy tickets now if possible. Schedule these dates on the family calendar.
- Set your Holiday budget. Make a list of gifts to buy and the approximate price of each item. Be sure to include other items such as decorations, the tree, gift wrap, cards and postage. A quick total may show that you need to scale back – better now than later.
- Update your mailing list to make any corrections for sending out Christmas cards. Consider a e-card greeting to save time and money.

October thru December

- Purchase Christmas cards now, if you haven't already done so.
- Get serious about on-line and catalog shopping. Place orders so that there is plenty of time for arrival (allow 4 weeks).
- Prepare pots of flower bulbs in October so they'll bloom in early December for gift giving.
- Create a Holiday To-Do list and write down everything you need to do, cook, give and attend during December. See what you can cross off and what you can delegate.
- Stock up on the staples and nonperishable foods you'll need for the holidays before the crowds get heavy at the supermarket. Start baking and freezing Holiday goodies.
- Schedule a night after Thanksgiving for family members to help sign, address, seal and stamp Christmas cards.
- Schedule babysitters for special parties or events in advance.
- Set a schedule for all major activities to occur in December and post on the family calendar. These might include a baking day, a gift wrapping day, a shopping day. Break each week of December down and list the tasks and goals for each week. Recruit and involve your family as much as possible.

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