

# MOMS

mentoring of mothers society

## 9 Ways to De-stress the Holidays

Christmas is a busy time for everyone, but especially for moms. Having a solid game plan for you and your family can relieve holiday stress and make family time much more enjoyable. Here are nine ideas to keep the holidays running smoothly:

1. Write a list of everyone you need to buy a gift for.
2. Set a budget for the total amount you need to spend.
3. Do not go into debt over Christmas spending. Decide what you can realistically afford and stick to it. Overspending creates a lot of stress.
4. Start a to do list on December

1<sup>st</sup>. Check it every morning to see what needs to be done that day. Delegate things to family members where applicable.

5. Post a December calendar on the fridge where everyone can see it. Pencil in all parties, school programs, church programs, practices etc. so nothing gets forgotten and you won't get double booked.

6. Line up babysitters early in the month as needed. Have them arrive a little early so you can do some last minute errands that you've been putting off.

7. Stock up on film and batteries for Christmas morning. Make sure your video camera is charged up and that your camera

has working batteries.

8. Pick a night for late night gift-wrapping with your husband. Turn on some Christmas music, fix your favourite late-night snack and wrap till you drop.

9. Plan a trade week with four other Moms. Choose a week in December to do this. Each Mom will choose one day that week to have all the kids for 4-5 hours. During that time the other Moms go out to do all their shopping etc. When it's your day to entertain the kids try a craft day, cookie making day or just a play day. You only put in your time for one day and you get 4 other days to do your errands. The kids get 5 days of fun.

## Christmas Classics for Children

*A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, is an excellent book for families with children nine years old and up. The story of the miserly Scrooge and the visits of the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future that redeem him was first published on December 17, 1843 and has remained popular ever since.

The newest edition is well designed with dramatic watercolor illustrations by P.J. Lynch on every two-page spread throughout the book.

The story of Scrooge has been told and retold in many different formats and styles. However, while many of these versions may capture some of the spirit of the original, none can come close to capturing the author's use of language and the ability of Charles Dickens to tell a story. This is a book for families to enjoy year after year. (Candlewick Press, 2006.)

*The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry is a classic Christmas

story that makes a wonderful Christmas read-aloud for children 10 and older and their families to enjoy together. The 2008 children's Christmas picture book edition of *The Gift of the Magi*, published by Candlewick Press, is illustrated with memorable artwork by P.J. Lynch. This moving tale of love and sacrifice can help to put the purpose of gift giving into perspective for tweens and teens with "wish" lists a mile long.

*The Littlest Angel* is a poignant classic by Charles Tazewell first published in 1946. The 2004 edition is illustrated with beautiful, warm paintings by Guy Porfirio. The story is simple and inspiring. A little boy, who has become the littlest angel in heaven, is unhappy and homesick. When the Understanding Angel responds to the littlest angel's request for the box of treasures he left at home, the littlest angel is happy. When he decides to give his box

of treasures to the Christ Child, it is a great act of love. However, he fears that his gift is not good enough and experiences great sorrow until God tells him, "I find this small box pleases me most."

*Christmas in the Barn* has simple rhythmic text by Margaret Wise Brown, and gentle watercolors of artist Diane Goode which make this a Nativity story well suited for very young children. While the heart of the story remains true to the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, details that might confuse a young child have been left out of both the text and the illustrations.

The artwork sets the story in what appear to be twentieth century rural America. The incorporation of phrases from well known hymns, such as "Away in a Manger" and "What Child is This" adds a note of familiarity to the story. This is a calm and soothing story, a good book to share at bedtime. (HarperCollins, 2004.)

DECEMBER 2009

### IN THIS ISSUE:

9 Ways to De-stress	1
Christmas Classics	1
Mom's Traditions	2
Health & Nutrition	2
Moms' Favorites	2
Quote of the Day	2

### MOMS

#### Purpose Statements

To provide a network that encourages and equips moms to be the best mothers they can be.

To provide mothers the opportunity for personal growth through developing their skills and talents.

To provide a safe place for women to share their struggles and concerns related to raising a family.

To provide experienced women the opportunity to mentor other mothers.

## MOMS' FAVORITES

### Shortbread

Shortbread is a classic Christmas favourite, and variations on the basic recipe are endless. Try some of these ideas this holiday season:

#### Basic Dough:

2 cups powdered sugar  
2 cups butter, softened  
2 egg yolks  
4 cups flour  
1 cup cornstarch

Divide dough in half. To a half recipe add the following:

#### Orange-Walnut Shortbread:

3/4 cup chopped walnuts and  
1 tbsp grated orange peel

Roll dough into 1" balls. Flatten with the bottom of a glass, press with a fork, or roll out and cut with cookie cutters. Bake at 350 for 8 to 13 minutes.

#### Chocolate Shortbread:

1 square baker's chocolate, melted  
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Bake as for Orange-Walnut Shortbread.

#### Cardamom Shortbread Wedges:

1 to 3 tsp cardamom  
1 tsp vanilla  
1/4 tsp almond extract

Press dough into 9" pie plate lined with foil. Bake and cool. Prepare glaze by mixing:

1 cup powdered sugar  
1/4 tsp vanilla  
1/8 tsp almond extract  
1 to 3 tbsp milk

Drizzle over slightly warm baked dough. Cut into 16 wedges while warm.

#### Mexican Wedding Cakes:

2 tsp vanilla  
1 cup finely chopped almonds or pecans

Roll into 1-inch balls. Bake at 325 for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from cookie sheet immediately. Cool slightly. Roll in powdered sugar. Cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Open your presents at Christmastime but be thankful year round for the gifts you receive.

*Lorinda Ruth Lowen*

## Moms' Christmas Traditions

Heidi Champagne

Recently I asked several friends about their favourite Christmas traditions. Most answered without hesitation. Probably because family traditions become ingrained; a part of our identity. They make us unique to other families and can be an important link between generations.

Don't underestimate the impact a tradition can make on your children. A friend with two adult children told me, "As my kids get older it's been curious and encouraging to see how important the traditions are for them."

Another friend, when sharing a revered childhood tradition said, "I will always treasure it. I have tears in my eyes just thinking about it".

If you don't have any family traditions of your own, it's never too late to start. You can create or adopt your very own. Others will just happen. Here's several traditions some very special moms shared with me that might inspire you:

"We read the Christmas story and pray before opening our gifts Christmas Eve, remembering those who are lonely, hungry, and don't know the real meaning of

Christmas. Sometimes after reading the Christmas story we each ask each person: if you could be any person in the story, who would you choose to be?"

*Taralin, mother of 2.*

"Each year, I choose a new Christmas tree ornament for each of our girls and give it to them when we decorate the tree. It's lovely to get out these ornaments and remember how a particular one was chosen--whether for a particular interest or because it was 'right' at the time. I love that each of our daughters will have a head start--and a little history--on their Christmas decoration collections when they have their own homes someday."

*Wendy, mother of 3.*

"We order Chinese food for Christmas Eve, pop in a Christmas movie (usually *The Crooked Little Christmas Tree* as it's been our favourite for years), and open our stockings."

*Shelley, mother of 1.*

My mother's side of the family is French so one of our family traditions is to eat Tortiere, a traditional French meat pie made of beef & pork, on Christmas Eve after

the evening service. Along with gifts that we might have wanted, it was also a tradition for everyone in the family to get new underwear. My mother still follows this tradition!

*Brenda, mother of 2.*

"Our family has made our own Christmas cards each year. We all contribute with ideas, cutting, pasting, stuffing envelopes etc. My daughter is now married, and she and her husband have carried on the tradition and send out beautiful cards as well. We both have our own albums of past cards. We are at 34 now!"

*Carol, mother of 1.*

"We read the Christmas story before we begin our Christmas dinner. We light the Advent candles reminding ourselves of what Jesus came to bring to us. Six people have numbered cards in front of their place setting with a few verses written inside. Whoever has #1 begins "In those days..." and #6 would close with "Glory to God in the highest..." (vs. 14) or "The shepherds returned...(vs. 19). It gets people involved and reminded of the greatest story ever told."

*Jane, mother of 2.*

## Health & Nutrition Tips - Holiday Eating

Some people worry about overeating during the holiday season. If you can avoid being too hungry, you'll be less likely to overeat. Try these tips to help you and your family to eat well over the holidays:

- Keep meals and snacks scheduled at regular times, e.g. every 3-4 hours

- Keep washed, cut up vegetables and fruits in the fridge to make healthy snacking easier

- Offer healthy food choices when you're in control of the food being served, try to include food groups that may be limited at holiday events,

e.g. vegetables and fruits

- Have a look at the foods offered at buffet tables before you start serving yourself and choose a limited number of items rather than everything

- Watch the portion sizes of foods that you eat, you can always save some for later or share with a friend

Put extra foods from celebrations into the freezer or send them home with your guests.

Consider giving gifts that encourage healthy lifestyles to show others that you care about their health. Here's some ideas to get you started:

- Fitness pass
  - Swim or skate passes
  - Pedometer
  - Sports equipment e.g. balls, skipping rope, skates
  - Videos or DVDs, e.g. yoga, tai chi, pilates
  - Vegetable steamer filled with a variety of herbs
  - Tea pot and an assortment of herbal teas
  - Salad bowl with fancy oils and vinegars
- Healthy recipe cookbook e.g. Dietitians of Canada