

Prepare for the holidays



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

This year, rather than buying into the marketing professionals' ideas of what you should be doing, why not simply lose all the things you loathe about Christmas and other holidays?

Be honest with yourself and your loved ones as, instead, you talk about the traditions that you and they enjoy the most. That are the most meaningful.

How can you make more of these and less of the pressures and propaganda delighting in telling you how much you should spend, how creative you should be and how much time you should have on your hands?

As early as possible, talk to everyone involved and decide which elements of previous holidays you want to repeat (maybe with tweaks so even these are more on your own terms) and those none of you will miss.

If there are things you hate but others seem to love, decide amongst yourselves who wants to take responsibility for making that

element happen. Being a martyr isn't the kind of energy you want to bring to the celebrations.

If you feel stuck, maybe go through old photos. Create a relaxed hour or so in which you can reminisce about your favourite holiday celebrations going back as

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far as you can remember.

Some of the traditions that spring to mind may have nearly been forgotten (and are unlikely to be unearthed at your nearest big department store).

You may have to do some research, ringing other family members and friends to get recipes or remind yourself about key elements.

Whether or not you believe in Santa, allow yourself to dream about the kind of day (or days) you long for. You and your family may well find that you all dream about the same kind of perfect

(for you all) holiday.

More likely, there'll be conflicting ideas about essentials and most loathed elements. Either way, you have time. You're just gathering information.

And once you have it, create a countdown or checklist that works for you. What can be prepared early to avoid last minute rushes? What can be ignored completely? What can be delegated?

What about the things you love? How can you make more time for these elements? Maybe you're not the only one who craves building and decorating gingerbread cottages. Why not combine such activities (only if you want to) with friends who feel the same way if no one in your family is keen?

Use all of your resources. Immediate family are rarely expected to meet each other's needs and yet holidays can put pressure on people who suddenly feel like they ought to be like the fictional families on TV.

Let yourselves off the hook and do things your way. ■