

Are Rules Stressing You Out?

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by Jeannine Lee, CPCC, ACC

***This article was written specifically for holiday stresses, but the same principles apply any time we are run by rules - our own or others'.*

Stresses come in so many ways. Physical stresses can come from tightly packed schedules, high expectations, and sampling far too many delicious sugary foods. Stresses on the pocket book come from spending more money than the budget allows creating a deficit that carries into the future. **We can create stress for the soul by holding the expectation that we must create a memorable and/or perfect holiday.** And relational stresses add to the whole lot of it when family members who purposely stay away from each other most of the year decide to be together for the holidays. If there have been losses such as death, divorce, or children leaving home, the holidays can be particularly stressful. Yes, if you let them, the holidays will create stress.

Perhaps you've never asked yourself the question: **“What do I WANT my holiday to be like?”** I ask you that now. If given the choice, not many of us would answer, “I'd like my holiday to put me in debt, make me fat and sick, and rob me of valuable family time.” And yet that is often exactly what we create. You know the old saying: To get what you've always had, keep doing what you've always done. Axiomatically, if we want something different we must DO something different. Perhaps the place to start is in challenging our own expectations. Are you creating your holiday from joy? Or is there a voice in your head — perhaps Mom, Grandmom, Father Christmas, Tradition, or even Better Homes and Gardens, insisting your holiday be a certain way? **How rebellious can you be for your own good?**

You can make new choices regarding every stressful aspect of the holiday season. Do you usually spend too much money on gifts? Make cookies for everyone this year. Do you eat too much and play or exercise too little? Fill your frig with healthy snacks and make sure you dance at those Christmas parties. **Become the person who is known for doing things a little different.** Is your schedule a run away train during the holidays? Practice saying “No.” It's good for everyone. Don't wait until New Year's to resolve to do different. If you need someone's permission, I give you mine. **I encourage you to become fun and taut and prickly and vivacious, and better than you've ever been, so you can have better than you've ever had.** Heck, it's supposed to be a celebration!

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She is available for health coaching at IHC to help you reach your vitality goals.