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# Claire's Tips and Tools for Relationships That Work

November 2005

## Put More "Holiday" in Your Holidays

Ah, the Thanksgiving holiday. There's nothing like having a long weekend to relax with friends and family. Now you're rested and refreshed, and diving into your work with new energy. Right? RIGHT?

If you can't answer that with a wholehearted **"Yes!"** then it's time to sit down with your partner and do a quick Turkey Day debrief.

I'm sure you've noticed that a lot of times after a big event, you have a really different view of what was important than you did during the build up. Right now you've got 20/20 hindsight about what worked-and what didn't-for your family at Thanksgiving. Use it as you plan for the holidays ahead.

**If you're like a most of your fellow Americans, you've got a date with exhaustion.** The Gallup Organization reports that 76% of American adults lose sleep between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Scheduling too many activities was a top reason, along with overspending and family issues.

My husband has never understood why this time of the year is called "the holidays." "It's a lot of fun, but it's not a holiday," he said. "A holiday is lying on a beach in Barbados."

Maybe you can't zip off to Barbados. **But you can put a little more holiday in your holidays.** Now, I'm not being pie-in-the-sky here. I realize you have obligations. Maybe spending Christmas Eve at your brother-in-law's house isn't your favorite thing to do, but you're going to step up, because it means a lot to your husband. Or maybe you're stressed about organizing the craft sale at your church, but you wouldn't think of passing up this chance to support your community.

I'm not saying you should make the holidays all about you. I am suggesting you ask yourself this question: **Was there anything I spent my precious time and energy on over Thanksgiving that didn't add to the experience?**

Even though her family helped out with Thanksgiving dinner, Tanya spent two solid days cooking. She made everything from scratch. And her cooking marathon was preceded by several large shopping expeditions, to find all those special ingredients. Did her family appreciate it? Of course they did. But could they really tell if she bought her sage at Whole Foods instead of QFC? Hardly. Would they rather have had less food and more time with Tanya? Definitely.

Two days before Thanksgiving, Angela found herself in Crate and Barrel buying a new set of dishes. This added about four hours to her preparations, all told. Was it worth it? Actually, it was. Her old dishes really had seen better days. For Angela, it was a great pleasure to see her family sit down to a beautiful table. (It also helped that Angela's

husband is an equal opportunity kitchen hand. But that's a topic for another newsletter!)

What's important at the holidays is different for every family. Is baking homemade cookies for the school Christmas play a chore or a joy? Only you can say. But I'd like you to take this challenge: **Cut your usual preparations by 20% and see if your friends and family notice.** Chances are the only thing they'll notice is that you're more fun to be with. And you might notice that you're actually having a holiday.

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