



GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

The phrase I hear most often these days is “let me get through the holidays.” And I completely understand it. As an introvert, I find the social gatherings exhausting. As a wellness director, the gifts of highly processed sweet, salty and fatty foods make me a little crazy. The light displays and blowup Santa Clauses are definitely at odds with the understated candlelit windows of my New England roots. Despite all of my personal pet peeves, there is one thing I love about the holidays - family traditions.

At one point, our family traditions were many. There was the card with the photo and the “brag and gag” letter that had to be in the mail no later than December 1st. The day after Thanksgiving, the decorating started. When I was done, the landscaping was visible from the International Space Station. The house was reminiscent of a Swiss chalet with bits of holiday décor in every room and a ten-foot tree festooned with lights and ornaments. There was an advent calendar with gifts each day. Christmas Eve was a Lobsterfest. Christmas Day was a cornucopia of gifts followed by a formal dinner on Christmas china: coquilles St. Jacques, standing rib roast, Yorkshire pudding, and my dear friend’s homemade rum cake.

Whatever you decide to do or not do,
don’t just get through it.

Enjoy every minute.

Happy Holidays!

Several years ago, my sons were going to be on a once-in-a-lifetime trip over the holidays. I decided that I didn’t really need all of our traditions if I was celebrating alone. So, I asked them “of all of the things we do to celebrate the holidays, what do you enjoy the most?” Their answers were surprising. They did not care one bit about the cards, the letter, the lights, the tree, the Swiss chalet motif, the cornucopia of gifts, the Yorkshire pudding or the rum cake. They insisted on three things: the advent calendar, the Lobsterfest, and the gift tags.



The advent calendar is decades old, wooden and crafted by LL Bean. It has 24 doors, one for each day leading up to the holiday. There is a little cubby behind each door where a Hershey's kiss fits nicely. Even today (they turn 26 years old next week) the calendar must be prominently displayed. No little gifts are required, but door opening remains a rock-paper-scissors worthy event.

The Lobsterfest is the traditional New England feast that includes clam chowder, steamed clams, lobster and cups of melted butter. Rather than rum cake, we have switched to key lime pie which is more palatable after the richness of the meal. For days afterward, cats prowl the now most aromatic house in the neighborhood.

The gift tags refer to an idea I had when I tired of writing "from Santa." Instead, I would provide a hint to the gift. For example, an iPad was from Steve Jobs, a sub shop gift card from Jersey Mike, a bottle of scotch from Johnnie Walker. They loved this more than anything else. It became a contest as to who could come up with the most creative clues. They also insist on an annual wall calendar. This year it will be photos of corgis and the gift giver will either be our family dog, James, or perhaps Queen Elizabeth. We'll see.

For years I had been killing myself to get through the holidays. Yet, the traditions that everyone really cared about were minute in comparison to the production I was putting on. After I took a more marketing approach, I enjoyed the season as much or more than anyone else and without descending into martyrdom. Do me a favor this year. Ask your loved ones what they hold near and dear and simply do that.

Whatever you decide to do or not do, don't just get through it. Enjoy every minute.

Happy Holidays!



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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