



## How to get Your Home Ready for the Holidays

While the holiday season can be a festive time full of friends and family, shared meals, and gatherings, it can be a time of added stress. There's always the expectation that everything will go smoothly, and that everything has to go smoothly. Yeah, right!

These expectations can hurt your season before it even begins. Nothing has to be anyone's idea of perfect, and the holidays aren't any different. They'll never be exactly the same as last year's, or as someone else's celebrations. As families grow and change, their traditions do also. Over the years, I've come up with some practical tips to get you through yours. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

**Be realistic.** Everything changes. Be open to creating new memories instead of comparing this year to previous ones. For example, if your children or grandchildren can't come "home," find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails, or videos. Think about rotating locations, or even taking a family holiday vacation to a dream destination.

**Keep it simple.** Keeping the decorating down to a minimum will help with the stress. I've reduced my stash down to one box full of the most meaningful ornaments, tree trimmings, and decorations. I've also stopped waking up early on Black Friday so that I can spend more time with my family; saving that extra nickel just isn't worth it.

**Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend, and then stick to your budget. An avalanche of gifts doesn't necessarily buy happiness. I've found some great alternatives to buying stuff, like donating to a charity in someone's name, giving homemade gifts, or even starting a family gift exchange. As a family, we have a blast with the white elephant gift exchange with a dollar limit on the spending.

**Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends, and other activities. Planning simple menus and making shopping lists will help to prevent those last-minute scrambles for forgotten items. If you're hosting the event, make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup!

**Come together.** Familiar holiday foods can bring back happy memories, and many hands make quick work. Let each family member participate by bringing a favorite dish to your holiday gathering. Then share the leftovers amongst the crowd.

**Late night.** It's a tradition at our house to break out the board games. Monopoly seems to be the game of choice and often keep us up late into the night.

**Don't abandon healthy habits.** Holidays often become a free-for-all of overindulgence. Feeling guilty about eating too much of the wrong foods only adds to your stress. Remember to have a healthy snack before holiday parties so you don't go overboard on sweets or rich foods, or incorporate something healthy into the dishes you plan on serving. Limit yourself to one or two drinks, continue to get plenty of sleep, and stay physically active.

**Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just a few minutes alone with no distractions will refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find your stress reliever. Take a walk, stargaze, or listen to soothing music.

**Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

Perfection and trying to be all things to all people is the ultimate recipe for stress. Your house will be ready for the holidays when you let go of unreasonable expectations, are open to change, and take time for yourself. Just sayin'.

*Sharon Dillard is the award-winning CEO & Co-founder of Get A Grip Resurfacing, a national kitchen and bathroom resurfacing franchise company based in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*