



# THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

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**IHF Newsletter, Vol. 3, No.11**

**November 15, 2011**

## *Are You Prepared for the Holidays?*

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How is your family preparing for the upcoming holidays? Are you looking forward to reconnecting with family and friends? Or, is this the "first" holiday season without a loved one? Perhaps money is tight and you have no idea how you are going to manage to buy gifts for everyone on your list. You may dread the thought of spending the holidays with relatives that you do not like.

Many people are facing this holiday season as a single parent through divorce or widowhood. Others are dealing with job loss, grieving for a loved one, lacking in financial resources, and facing unresolved conflicts with relatives and/ or adult children. Here are some ideas to consider from Dr. Roy Austin, LPC, LMFT, a professional therapist in McKinney, TX. For the full article, contact Dr. Austin at [raustin10@sbcglobal.net](mailto:raustin10@sbcglobal.net).

1. Clarify what you want from the holidays: What are your expectations and expectations of family members?
2. Emphasize the positive aspects of the holidays: What new opportunities await you?
3. Deemphasize commercialism: What are creative ways you can stay within your budget?

Dr. Austin cautions families and individuals to "avoid expecting more from the holidays than you can realistically provide. At the same time, don't expect less from them than they can be." He goes on to say, "Discuss all your options: What can you afford? What are your time constraints? Who do you want to invite?" He also suggests that this is the time to mend broken fences with family members. Ask for and receive forgiveness where needed.

By emphasizing the positives associated with the holidays, this is the time to identify those things for which you are truly grateful--a job in a tough economy, good health, neighbors and friends who care, your church or school, and your plans for a better future. Do what you want and can do without creating excessive stress.

If money is tight--and who doesn't have to rein in spending these days, then get creative. Don't buy everything! Thoughtful handmade gifts and homemade "goodies" are often more appreciated by the recipient than those that are purchased. As a child I remember a favorite uncle who made a cradle for my doll. I also remember delicious homemade caramel corn lovingly made by my grandmother and beautifully decorated cookies made by my mother.

Make your own tree decorations from Christmas cards and natural materials such as pine cones, popcorn and cranberries. Involve your family in a community service project such as visiting shut-ins. Go through old photos of your family and put together a "special album" for each. My father was a photographer and his gifts always included the cutest pictures of my children.

Whether or not you are a religious person, find a church or synagogue this season. This is a beautiful time of year and perhaps you will find inner peace by participating in church services. Discover the wonderful holiday music, drama and art presentations in your community. Attend a holiday music concert or a play at a school. Don't allow the opportunities of this season to pass you by.

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