Make It Meaningful: Re-Connecting to the Spirit of the Holiday Season

While the pages of the calendar fly off the wall and your holiday to-do list only seems to grow longer, the spirit of the season can start to get lost in all the errand-running, crowd-battling and fatigue of the season. Before you find yourself muttering "bah humbug," try rediscovering the joy of the holidays by:

Getting outside. Don't let the beauty of this time of year go unnoticed. Snowy days, icicles dangling from the eaves, crisp air, and outdoor activities like tobogganing, skiing or ice skating are all reminders of the enchantment of the season. Take a few moments to get outside and reconnect with your surroundings.

Taking care of your health. The holiday season can be a real stress on your mind and body. Ensure you get the sleep and exercise you need to make it to the New Year. Don't skip meals, and try to eat a balanced diet. Remember: it's easier to get into a festive mood when you're well-rested and not under the weather.

Coming together. Unless you're absolutely and completely relishing the idea of spending the holidays alone, it's good to get out and socialize at this time of year. The flurry of activity around mixing and mingling can take your mind off the shorter days, colder temperatures and stresses of life. Accept invitations from friends and family members. If none are offered, why not consider extending a few of your own?

Scaling down. Sometimes doing less can give you more time to focus on the things that really matter. If it's your seasonal tradition to decorate, for example, consider scaling back this year—a wreath and a few strings of lights can lift your spirits just as much as week-long extravaganza of adornment.

Control the credit crunch. Overextending your budget by putting holiday purchases on credit now will make for more stress later. When you pay for items with cash, you'll see how much you're spending, will be less inclined to spend more than you can afford and can avoid a January holiday budget hangover.

Giving care-fully. It is the heart of the giver that makes the gift precious. Though you might like to believe you can find the perfect gift at the last minute, great gift ideas come to those who plan. Keep your eyes and ears open to your recipients' hearts desires throughout the year. And don't hesitate to ask the recipient's friends and family members for advice.

Appreciating the good things in life. Though during exhaustingly busy times you may wonder what the effort is all for, every now and then it's important to sit down, put aside the difficulties and stresses of life and reflect on the things that you do have. By focusing on the good things, you not only gain an important bit of perspective, but will draw more positive energy towards you.

Kindling the home fires. When the days grow short, there are few things more comforting than the warmth and brightness of a fire. The warm, meditative glow of candles or a fireplace burning bright offers instant re-connection with the spirit of the season.

Giving of yourself. Though you might feel harried in the lead-up to the holidays, it can be a real revelation to consider the realities of people in your community who could use your help and support. Volunteering to serve meals to the homeless or collecting food and presents for families in need can do wonders to take your mind off your own problems, set a great example for co-workers and relatives and can help you really appreciate your own good fortune.

Dealing with the many stresses of the holiday season can be a real challenge. By taking the time to simplify and enjoy the most meaningful parts of the holidays, relish the company of family and friends, and reflect on all you do have, you're not only more likely to minimize the demands on your pocket and time, but also re-inject your world with the true spirit of the holiday season.