

3 Ways to Prevent Holiday Madness

by Helene Segura, MA Ed, CPO®

'Tis the season to be fun and festive, but flailing about in a disorganized frenzy will certainly dampen anyone's spirits. Getting it together pays big dividends, so here are three ways to do that:

Decorations

As you haul out your boxes, bags, and totes full of holiday cheer, take the time to do a little purging and planning. Discard anything that's broken, melted, or so faded that you can't tell what color it used to be. Donate decorations that you haven't used in the past few years. Keep a running list of any replacement supplies for which to keep an eye out during the post-holiday sales. When it's time to put everything away (hopefully before Groundhog Day), divide up your lidded plastic containers into categories so that next time it will be easier to find what you need. Some people prefer to divide their containers by room (den, porch, living room, etc.); others categorize by type – figurines, tree ornaments, wall hangings, etc. How much is enough? That will be determined by how much storage and display space you have. If you have an entire room that you can devote to holiday storage, have at it! If not, dedicate one specific area (a single shelf, one shelving unit, one-quarter of your attic) to your holiday decorations so that they're in a single location.



Gifts

Many a-time I've helped a client clear out an area only to hear, "Oh, I bought that to give to my niece two years ago." If you keep hiding places all around the house, you'll forget where those secret places are. Whether you pick up and stash gifts year-round or you wait until the day before Hanukkah or Christmas or Kwanzaa to make a mad dash, you should designate a specific spot in your house for gift storage. In that same area, keep all of your gift-wrapping supplies: paper, ribbon, bags, tags, cards, scissors, pens, and tape. If your gift station is not located near a table or counter that can provide workspace, consider having a gift-wrapping session and bring in a card table, chair, and refreshing beverage. If any of the gifts need to be shipped, have the shipping supplies on standby so you can take care of that at the same time. Be sure to check www.usps.com for mailing deadlines.

Parties

If you want to throw the party of the year, it won't just suddenly come together the night before. Let the lists begin! At the minimum, you should have an invite/RSVP list, a menu/grocery list, and a house-prep task list. If you have a partner in crime, be sure that person knows what his/her responsibility is so that you're not glaring at each other, asking who was supposed to pick up the appetizers - all as your guests arrive. If you'll be on the holiday party circuit, have a selection of thoughtful host gifts ready to grab from your gift station as you run out the door.

Be as organized as possible, but don't obsess so much about perfection (unobtainable, by the way!) that you forget to let your hair down. Enjoy this wonderful time of year!

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