

6 Ways To Feel You Have More, When You Have Less,

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At a time when pensions are disappearing, foreclosure rates are rising, social services are being cut, and family vacations are disappearing, how can one feel like they have more with less? It is possible. With some simple modifications in how we approach the holidays we can change a lot about how we feel this season. We can find ways to feel rich and full, no matter what number is in our bank account.

Try these simple ideas:

Include more people in your plans.

Together you can rent a beautiful vacation home, when alone you would be edged out. Plan to cook meals together, and share in the expense and the work. Feel the joy of camaraderie and of being part of a tribe. Build and rely upon the community you have. Get reacquainted with old friends. Reminisce about the past. Independence is wonderful, but interdependence is better. It feeds our primal need for togetherness. It reminds us that in life we are not alone. Focus on the bounty of people in your life, and the joy it brings to feel community support.

Think outside of the box.

Start a new tradition for the holidays. Bring square dancing into your life or create your own holiday choir. Start a book club. Bring joy to yourself and others through some creative process. Re-ignite the voice of the child who sees only wonder in every moment or activity. Remember through play or action what it feels like to enjoy simple activities in life.

Set a precedent.

Tell your friends you are returning to simpler times, and ask their cooperation. Ask friends and family to make their gifts to you this year, or at least one gift. Ask them to write a letter telling you what you mean to them. Ask them to paint a picture, or write a song, or bake your favorite treat. When you agree to exchange gifts put a spending limit of \$10 or \$15 on your gifts. Make the holidays about the holidays, not the gifts.

Reconnect to your faith.

What do you believe? Why do you believe it? Remember why you practice the traditions you do. Reconnect to your spiritual community. Often rituals practiced in religious traditions bring us closer to other people, and to our core beliefs. This feeds the soul. It brings depth and perspective to the life experience. It reminds us that our lives have purpose. Embrace your spirituality.

Have a holiday Pow Wow.

This is not a gift exchange party. The purpose of the Pow Wow is to share a talent or craft you have with the people around you. Or, allow it to be an opportunity to say to your family and friends verbally or by written word why you appreciate them. Form a circle and let every person speak from their heart, read some poetry, play the guitar, or tell a story that made an impact on them this year. Create meaning by sharing moments of meaning among yourselves.

Consider volunteering.

When we contribute to the well being of others, we give perspective to our own life challenges. Even if we feel we have nothing to give we still have something of value to contribute ...our good will toward others. It costs nothing to share a smile with a stranger, or serve a plate of food to a hungry person. It reminds us how connected we all are, and the power we have to make a difference in life and on the planet.

All these ideas center around the concept of simplicity. We have come to believe we have to give more, buy more, spend more and top the purchases of the year before. Much of what is occurring in our global economy is reminding us that it's not what you have that makes you feel good inside. What makes you feel good inside is the security that comes from having people around you who love you. Security comes when we live within our means. Security comes when we embrace a spiritual reality. Use this time of "less" to remember all the things that truly feed us and make us feel full.

This season give yourself permission to think small in the "things" department. Think big in the "people" department. Think of as many ways as you can to share, contribute, create and plan

together. When the focus is removed from performance and doing everything ourselves, we open up our lives to receive the most precious gift of all, the love of those around us. That's what the holidays are about. There is a saying about love that goes like this "the testament to a life well lived is not how many people we love, but how many people love us." This season focus on cultivating people who will love you. Love cannot be bought. It is grown through connection and validation. This season give yourself permission to focus on the real gift we give each other. Each other.