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NAPO-NY's Ideas for Staying Organized and Enjoying Hassle-Free Holidays

The holiday season is a time for celebration: fancy food, diva decorating and family activities. It can also be a time of stressful shopping and last-minute entertaining and overwhelming activities. Learn to be selective in everything including gifts you buy and events you attend. It's a time to focus on reconnections and relationships.

Sharon Lowenheim, President of NAPO-NY says, "Staying organized throughout the holidays can help reduce the stress and allow more of the fun to come through. Enjoy all of the free things around us – decorated store windows, music, holiday fairs, all the smiles – and don't let the mad rush get you down."

Here are a few organizing tips to make the holiday season merry and bright.

KISS: Simplify everything

Keep it simple sweetheart. There's a new trend afoot. Less is more. Quality, not quantity. Winter sports, baking cookies and simple decorations are fun. Wrap gifts with natural materials: Kraft paper and twine recycled from the laundry delivery. Give clutter free gifts: experiences and consumables. Who doesn't love a pedicure and dark chocolate cupcakes?

Holiday entertaining

Make sure the food is delicious and festive but keep the menu limited. Rather than spending days grocery shopping and cooking every dish under the sun, prepare a few tried-and-true crowd-pleasing dishes and buy luxurious desserts and tempting appetizers. Light a candle, scatter fresh flowers and pour some wine. Voila, it's a party!

Create a holiday planner

Corral all those loose lists in one happy place to amend year after year. Holiday budget, gift ideas, calendar, greeting card labels, recipes, menus and guest lists, decorations inventory. No more looking for that itty-bitty sticky note. Print out sheets on the computer for your binder. Often websites offer free programs and page templates.

Plan ahead

Purchase and wrap out of town gifts first. Get to the post office early in the season to avoid long lines and anxiety. Send out party invitations early to give guests plenty of notice.

Wrap a stash

Keep a few extra gifts for unexpected occasions. Natural soaps, chocolates and a lovely bottle of wine dressed in a velvet sleeve are always welcome. Now you can accommodate unanticipated gifts and last minute pop-in friends.

Enlist your kids

Give each child a special job for the holidays. They'll enjoy the ownership of a holiday task such as boxing the cookies or setting the table, and it makes your life easier.

Save your feet

Shop at home. Web stores offers a huge array of products, and best of all, they pack, wrap and ship. No need to fight the crowds, beat traffic or stand in lines. No need to take off your slippers. Comfy and efficient!

Call on help

Organizing sessions before the holidays can help. Donate some toys to make room for a whole new batch and teach children organization and generosity. Activity zones for baking, wrapping presents and mailing can be set up in a snap with the right tools gathered in a bin or cabinet. Sorting allows you to see what you have so you won't bring home 12 more rolls of tape to add to the 12 you already own but couldn't find.

Pack in style

Pack holiday ornaments, lights and decorations in plastic bins with dividers made just for this purpose to keep them in good shape in storage all year long. Many are made in red so you can identify them easily in your storage area.

Take time to relax

Take time off to sip a soothing cup of tea, take a bath or a long walk, have a massage. Don't forget self-care for you and your family.

About NAPO-NY

NAPO-NY is the New York chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers, the world's premier professional community dedicated to serving the interests and development of professional organizers. Founded in 1987, NAPO-NY is over 100 members strong and boasts a diverse array of organizing consultants, speakers, trainers, authors and manufacturers of organizing products who provide organizing services to individuals, families and businesses throughout the New York metropolitan area.

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