



# The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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## Coping With the Holidays

The following material may be helpful to you in recognizing and dealing with what is commonly referred to as “the holiday blues.” With exception to references to alcohol, the lists are as they appear on the website: [www.nicholls.edu/counseling/newsletters.coping-with-the-holidays/](http://www.nicholls.edu/counseling/newsletters.coping-with-the-holidays/)

### Factors contributing to the “holiday blues:

- ◆ Increased stress
- ◆ Unrealistic expectations
- ◆ Family issues
- ◆ Over-commercialization
- ◆ Memories
- ◆ Changes in daily routines
- ◆ Not having enough money
- ◆ Spending more than you can afford
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Shopping, cooking, parties
- ◆ Too much food
- ◆ Weight gain
- ◆ House guests

### Symptoms of “holiday blues”

- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Sleep problems

- ◆ Appetite change/weight loss or gain
- ◆ Agitation
- ◆ Excessive feelings of guilt
- ◆ Difficulty in concentration
- ◆ Decreased interest in usually pleasurable activities

### Some basic coping strategies:

- ◆ Live the basics of good health—eat right, get plenty of rest, exercise regularly
- ◆ Set realistic goals and expectations
- ◆ Let go of the past
- ◆ Try something new
- ◆ Set aside differences
- ◆ Enjoy free holiday activities
- ◆ Do something for someone else
- ◆ Spend time with supportive people
- ◆ Find time for yourself
- ◆ Focus on what you have instead of what you do not have.

*Remember, the “holiday blues” are usually a normal response to a stress filled time of year and are usually short-lived, subsiding after the holidays are over and routines are resumed.*

## Eating Meals Together—Not As Tough As We Might Think

Research continues to underscore the value of families eating meals together. A TIME magazine article noted: “*Studies show that the more often families eat together, the less likely kids are to smoke, drink, do drugs, get depressed, develop eating disorders, and consider suicide, and the more likely they are to do well in school, delay having sex, eat their vegetables, learn big words, and know which fork to use.*” If such “sit-down” moments seem impossible to you, or increase familial guilt, let me remind you of two things.

◆ **First**, the menu and the décor are not as important as spending time together talking. The key is not so much what we eat (nutrition is another article), but what we do while we eat it. Made-from-scratch, micro-waved, or carry-out meals may all be effectively used at the table.

◆ **Secondly**, there are tools available to simplify menu design, grocery shopping, and preparation in advance. Leanne Ely has authored a book entitled

*Saving Dinner* in which she provides six dinner ideas a week, provides you the recipes for each entrée, and even compiles a shopping list for all the ingredients. Check out [SavingDinner.com](http://SavingDinner.com) for more information.

Spouses need to spend time eating together as well. That is why date nights and coffee together are important marriage builders.

## Learning About Contentment

A Russian woman lived with her husband and two children. Then her husband's parents lost their home and she had to take them into hers.

The coughing of the old folks and the crowding were unbearable. In desperation, she went to the village wise man, whom she knew had solved many, many problems.

"What should I do?" she begged.

"Do you have a cow?" asked the wise man.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then bring her into the hut, too. And come back and see me in a week," said the wise man.

A week later, she was back. "This is utterly unbearable," she said.

"Do you have any chickens?" asked the wise man.

"Yes," she replied, "What about them?"

"Bring them into the hut, too," he said. "Then come

back and see me in another week."

"You're utterly out of your mind," she said. Nevertheless, still awed by his reputation, she did as he asked.

A week later she returned. "This is absolutely impossible," she said. "Our home is a mess."

"All right," said the wise man, "Take out the chickens."

The next week she reported that without the chickens it was definitely better, but still a miserable situation.

"All right," said the wise man, "Now, take out the cow. That will settle your problem."

And it did. Without the chickens and the cow to contend with, the woman, her husband, her two children, and his parents got along quite peacefully. Everything, you see, is relative. Sometimes we don't know how well off we really are.

But wasn't it Paul a long, long time ago who expressed this same principle in a rather different way when he said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." But of course, his key to this discipline is in the following verses, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:11-3)

When you remove the chickens and cow, things aren't too bad, are they? —from *The Watchman*, Woodbury, TN

### *The Family Friend*

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## General "Stress Busters" for Family Members

- ◆ Daily prayer
- ◆ Reading the Bible for devotional purposes
- ◆ A daily walk or exercise routine
- ◆ An occasional meal at a "nice restaurant"
- ◆ Watching a ballgame (in person or on television)
- ◆ Watching a movie
- ◆ Regular talks about the important issues of life—"just in case"
- ◆ Regular talks about "mundane" issues of life—things "just for fun"
- ◆ Hugs
- ◆ Giving monetary gifts to a worthy cause
- ◆ Time spent helping someone else (volunteering at a school, nursing home, etc.)
- ◆ Regular vacation time
- ◆ An occasional "splurge" on a favorite dessert or candy
- ◆ A "drive" along the back roads or riverside
- ◆ Reading an "adventure story"
- ◆ Devoting an hour to "de-cluttering" house or workspace
- ◆ "Surfing the Internet" about hobby, favorite athletic team, etc.

—Lance Cordle