

Get in the Holiday Spirit!

By Sally E. Smith

The holidays are just around the corner, which means we're entering the season filled with celebration, shopping, and giving. Some people embrace the holiday season, many approach it as a time of both joy and stress, and others want to push the fast forward button to January 1 and skip the holidays altogether. As plus-size women, we can have additional anxiety about the holidays – what to wear to parties, how to deal with size prejudice from family members, and ways to negotiate the hassles of travel with size-unfriendly airlines, car rental agencies, and such.

Despite the headaches and hassles, though, the holidays are a special time. When you plan ahead and open yourself to the possibilities of the season, you can experience and share an abundance of joy and generosity. Here are five ideas to help you get into the holiday spirit.

1. **Throw a Party!** You don't have to put on a gala to be the hostess with the mostest. Plan a simple breakfast or brunch, and invite a small group of friends to show up in their pajamas. Ask each to bring a holiday memento and story from her childhood. Hang out and share remembrances, hot cocoa, and great food.
2. **Give As Well As Receive.** Giving feels better than getting anytime of year, but it feels especially great during the holiday season. Either alone or with a group of friends, decide what you'd like to do for those who are less fortunate. Adopt a family in need, collect canned goods for the local food bank, volunteer to deliver holiday dinners to those who can't get out, or go caroling at a home for seniors. Plus-size women are disproportionately affected by the economic downturn, so contributions of your gently used clothing would delight our plus-size sisters.
3. **Get Creative.** Gifts don't have to be expensive to be meaningful. In fact, the opposite is often the case. When you plan ahead, you can create gifts that will touch family members' hearts. Dig through that old box of family photos and frame reprints, collect your grandmother's secret recipes and create a mini-cook book, or ask your siblings for baby socks from each niece and nephew. Stuff them with fiberfill, sew up the tops, and create tree ornaments.
4. **Look through the Eyes of a Child.** The holidays are magical for children, so it's easy to fuel your holiday spirit by experiencing their excitement. Know a single mom? Chances are, her child doesn't have an opportunity to buy or make a gift for the mom. Spend an afternoon with the child, taking him shopping or supplying him with materials to make a gift. Or, you can drive around looking at lights and decorative houses, create homemade wrapping paper or hand-stamped gift bags, or bake a batch of cookies. The child's inner light will cause you to glow.
5. **Treat Yourself.** Get prepared for the holiday season by finding one or two outfits that will make you feel and look your best. A gorgeous dress will be perfect for the annual office party or family holiday dinner, while a beautiful blouse and jacket will take to other holiday festivities.

However you choose to celebrate the season, do so with spirit, with joy, and with generosity. When you do, you'll embrace the holidays and be well prepared for a fabulous New Year. Happy Holidays!

Sally