

**DECEMBER
2018**

I was a kid on my bike heading to Grandma's house because my big sister had just said, "There is no Santa Claus." I knew Grandma would tell me the truth. I told her everything and she replied, "Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad! Now, put on your coat, and let's go." Grandma drove to the General Store. When we got there, she gave me \$10.00 and told me to buy something for someone in need and she would wait in the car. I was only eight and I had never done this before. I finally thought of a classmate's name. In the winter, he never went out to play at recess. His mother always wrote a note saying he had a cold but all the kids knew he did not have a coat. I picked out a coat, and while paying told the cashier about my classmate. That night when we wrapped the coat I noticed a tag fall out of the bag, which Grandma immediately tucked in her Bible. She wrote on the package "From Santa Claus." She said Santa insisted on secrecy as we went to drop off the package. We hid in the bushes waiting for the door to open and for my classmate to find his gift. Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering with my Grandma in those bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said, "They were totally ridiculous." Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside: \$19.95. May you always have LOVE to share, HEALTH to spare and FRIENDS that care. And may you always believe in the magic of Santa Claus!

LESSONS FROM SANTA

The spirit of Santa teaches the following lessons:

- Be good for goodness sake. If our actions are consistently good we have little to fear. The good we do will quietly be written onto our souls.
- Focus on the needs of others. Attention placed on the needs of others will bring many rewards back to the giver.
- Give from the heart. If you allow your heart to guide your actions, you will automatically respond with love and care.
- Feel the magic in life. Santa is about magic and wonder. Take time to look for the wonder in life and the magic of each day.
- Believe you can fly. When we learn to let go and allow hope to guide us, we can soar.
- Remember to laugh. Laughter is contagious so have a jolly laugh with someone today.
- It is more important to give than receive. Santa reminds us that in our "want it right now world," the joy that giving brings is a priceless gift.
- Take time to enjoy the cookies. Santa is a busy man but he still takes time for a cookie and a sip of milk at each home.



WAYS TO HAVE A MORE RELAXED HOLIDAY

1. Set reasonable expectations. Even with the decorations up and the holiday music playing, the many challenges of family life will remain. Reasonable expectations will help you feel less frustrated when reality doesn't match the picture in your head. **2. Remember plans may change.** Be flexible. You should make plans, but don't get so stuck on the plans that you can't enjoy the actual holiday. **3. Be consistent when you can.** During vacation staying up late, sleeping in, and eating cookies for breakfast may be ok, but you should stay true to the schedules that actually impact your family's ability to stay healthy and function. **4. Plan for fun and relaxation.** Don't schedule so much that there's no time to enjoy what you are doing or to be spontaneous. **5. Give more experiences.** Studies show that the more stuff kids have, the less happily and creatively they play. Go to a Children's Museum or a movie instead of giving them more presents. **6. Be on vacation.** The holidays give us the chance to take a different (and better) approach to life. To the extent that you can, leave your work at work, let go of your to-do list, and just be with your family. **7. Establish holiday rituals.** This includes baking cookies, building a snowman, working on a craft or pouring extra cups of hot cocoa and snuggling up and watching a holiday movie. Holidays are special because we make them that way, so enjoy your time together and build lasting family memories.

APPRECIATE THE GIFT OF HEALTH

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, give these tips for staying healthy this winter:

1. Wash your hands often. This is an important step to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Use soap and clean running water, rubbing hands together for at least 20 seconds.
2. Stay warm. Cold temperatures can cause health problems. Stay dry and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting clothing.
3. Manage stress. Keep your commitments and spending in check. Balance work, home, and play.
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If needed use your sleeve but never your hands.
5. Get plenty of rest. Getting needed rest will help keep you relaxed and maintain a positive attitude.
6. Get a flu shot.
7. When cooking avoid cross contamination, cook foods to their proper temperature and refrigerate promptly.
8. Eat healthy and stay active. Choose fresh fruit and limit fats, salt, and sugary foods. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week.

Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly Happy Holiday.

GIVING BACK

As we prepare for the holiday season, let's remember the "attitude of gratitude" and give back to others. Why not make December the month of "Giving Back" in hopes of putting a smile on someone's face. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Put together a care package and send it to a military unit.
- Clean out your closet and give good items to charity.
- Take a treat to a local fire/police department and express your gratitude for their service.
- Stop by a nursing home or hospital and ask if there is someone who might enjoy a visit.
- Donate blood this month. Remember: a pint of blood can save up to three lives.
- Donate cat/dog food to an animal shelter. Call and ask what is needed.
- Perform one daily simple random act of kindness.
- At least once a day compliment someone.
- Smile at every stranger you see. A smile can make someone's day.
- Leave gratitude notes for your family, friends, and co-workers.