



MY OPINION

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'Tis the Season for . . . Renewal

Were you aware that, with the possible exception of indigenous equatorial/southern hemisphere peoples, almost every culture and religion has some sort of celebration of renewal at this time of year?

Out of ancient Persia we have Shab-e Yalda. From prehistoric Europe we get druidic celebrations surrounding the winter solstice. Buddhists give us Rohatsu, from Christianity we have, of course, Christmas, and Judaism gives us Hanukkah. The list is old, and the list goes on, adding new traditions (such as Kwanzaa) as our cultures evolve.

Some have suggested that irrespective of religion or culture, these renewal celebrations serve the purpose of chasing away the winter blahs — a kind of ancient chicken soup for the soul — by focusing attention away from the dead of winter toward coming spring. I like that idea.

Too often, we anticipate the holidays with a sense of dread. We have to go to this holiday party. Then we have to attend this reception or that luncheon. Next we have to plan how and where we will spend time with our families, how we will balance that time, and whether or not we will take a vacation. We must send out reams of holiday cards. Then we have to shop for presents, wrap said presents, bake cookies — the list goes on. Looked at through that lens, it's all very daunting and stressful.

When you boil it down, though, you can look at all these activities as an opportunity for renewal. That holiday party and reception? It's a great opportunity for you to reconnect with friends and colleagues that you may not have seen for months. Planning the family vacation?



It's a time to renew traditions and bonds (or create new ones as your family expands or contracts). Buying presents, sending cards, and baking? All are opportunities for us to remind someone important in our lives that we care.

Of course, how you go about the holiday season will determine in large part what you get out of it. I spoke about embracing the moment at the beginning of this year, and this is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

Give yourself the luxury of time this holiday season. If you are attending a party for just one hour — do just that for one hour. Put away the cell phones and email and enjoy the people you are with and the moment you have. Shopping with the kids? Resist the pull of that blinking red light telling you a message is

waiting. It will wait. In short, let's take care of each other and ourselves this holiday season and truly rejuvenate.

I was once asked if I was a glass half-empty or a glass half-full type of girl. I responded that however you looked at it, I obviously needed another drink. Sometimes the holidays just demand a practical approach. I'm not suggesting that we can magically take the stress out of the season by repeating over and over "I am not stressed, I am not stressed." What I'm suggesting is that we refocus our energy from looking only at obligations and deadlines to looking at the joy that fulfilling all those obligations and deadlines can bring to us and to our loved ones, either in the short term or long term.

So, on that note, I raise a glass to the season and all the opportunity it brings! ✪