



# This Christmas, Create a Healthy Home!

by CLAUDETTE E. S. COOMBS

**W**hen it comes down to what really matters in life... where do your thoughts wander? Every decision has consequences. Every action requires a choice.

If we really want to know our values, we need to monitor where we spend our resources. Are they balanced the way we want them to be? Although *energy* and *finances* are two critical personal resources, they may not reflect our ultimate values. Usually, with a little rest and self-care we can renew our energy level. Likewise, with some planning, budgeting and if necessary some professional assistance and attitude adjustments, we can get our financial lives in order. However, *time* is a non-renewable resource that we continuously trade off for other important things in our lives.

We can use our energy now, or conserve it for planned activity later. If we use our energy on daily demands, exercise or partying, we can put things on hold by taking a rest or break until we rebuild our supply for the next adventure. We can also save or spend and plan or be spontaneous with our finances. If we make mistakes or use poor judgement, we still have the option of working toward rebuilding our financial security.

We don't have the same liberties with our time. If we spend our time wisely, foolishly, or regrettably – it is still spent! We don't have a second chance with that trade. However, as long as we are alive and aware, we have a choice about how we spend this time.

## Personal Assessment

To start off making the best trade in return for our time we must assess where we are, what we want and where we want to be in the future. Although we cannot guarantee the future, if we live into it without planning for it, we end up wasting opportunities and living with unnecessary regrets.

Just for a moment, think about school Placement Tests. They serve a definite purpose. They set a base-

line, avoid unnecessary review, provide a foundation for measuring progress and give tools for directing action. That's enough thought of school and work for now, we are into the holiday season! Now back to the other important parts of life. What does your personal Placement Assessment show? What are the goals from your heart? Are you making plans to achieve those goals? Are you taking steps daily in the right direction? Remember, activity doesn't equal achievement. To make progress, we must focus activity in the direction of our goals.

## Career

Certainly our careers have taken up much of our mental and physical energy from our early days of planning to be a teacher, through our university years of studying and into our years of dedicated teaching. Usually, we have those plans well under control. It may take awhile to reach them but we generally know what we want ... complete a Masters Degree, follow an administrative path, excel in our field, or positively influence lives on our way to retirement. Whatever we decide, we have the tools and knowledge to get there. Unfortunately, we are often less clear about our personal lives.

## Personal

At this time of year there is greater demand on our social lives and more focus on our family connections. During the summer we tend to think of vacations and rejuvenation. At Christmas time we tend to think of connecting with family.

For many, Christmas time presents a different set of challenges. For people who are not single by preference, this time of year highlights loss, loneliness and the absence of a significant personal relationship. In dealing with loss, there are things to do which can change our feelings and experience of being alone. We can assess our current status and our potential for change. We can identify the components of loss which have the greatest impact on our sense of well-

being and fulfillment. If we temporarily suspended our emotional involvement and considered the situation the way we would a research assignment, it wouldn't take long to come up with positive options!

For others, Christmas time represents a high energy, frantic response to meeting the needs or wishes of others while leaving you exhausted and feeling that the joy of the season has bypassed you. That suggests that it is time to do things a little differently.

The strategy is to increase supports and decrease stress. By bringing others into the picture and by relinquishing some of the responsibilities and delegating tasks, the workload can be lessened, the demands made more reasonable and the pleasures multiplied.

### **Creating Change**

According to Buddha, "We are what we think. All that we are arises from our thoughts." That suggests that if we don't like where we are, change begins with our thoughts. If we think "worry, anger, sadness, distress", then we become that. Thoughts become chemical messengers within our bodies. These negative toxins accumulate and determine our state of physical and emotional well-being. Alternatively, we can plan a happy, healthy holiday by making the magic happen. By adjusting our attitudes and pre-determining our actions we set a direction which leads to a positive holiday season. We can create a healthy home within ourselves!

We use special dates, seasons or set times of the year to serve as reminders to engage in specific behaviours or to motivate us. Although we accept one date to generate a focus, usually on reflection, celebration or change, it does not exempt us from maintaining focus or action during the remainder of the year. During Remembrance Day we reflect on the sacrifices of soldiers. Our gratitude is no less genuine because we focus our actions on one day. We use birth and wedding anniversaries to remind us of personal choices and the positives in life. Smokers often use select dates such as: World No-Tobacco Day, National Non-Smoking Week or Weedless Wednesday to quit smoking. As all smokers know, this isn't a one-time effort! Likewise, Canada's Fitweek is designed to 'kick-start' our fitness routine and encourage us to be more active every day.

In line with Christian heritage, we see Christmas as the season of hope and joy. We express that by sharing, helping others and receiving help. This makes Christmas an ideal time, or if we prefer, we can use "New Year's Resolutions" to jump-start our change of heart and mind. We can avail of all opportunities to grow personally and experience the real

value of living. In the quiet glow of the Christmas tree lights, take time to reflect on the important things in life and where you spend your resources of time and energy. In that moment of personal assessment, acknowledge the challenges but also identify the areas of life that interfere with the health of your home.

We can be thankful for life's challenges because they offer us the opportunity and motivation to improve our lives and to focus on what is most important to us, thereby encouraging us to plot our desired direction. Generally it can be helpful to accept that view of challenge, but for this season, take the time that belongs to you and those you cherish. Put thoughts of workplace-associated stressors aside. Recognize that what you are trading for your time this season should be worth what you are giving up!

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