

Relationship Rehab Show

FREE DOWNLOAD: Episode # 25

Choose Joy for the Holidays!

Buy the perfect gifts for...everyone. Don't spend too much money. Bake the holiday favorites. Don't forget the tree needs trimming! Show up at your friends open house. Show appropriate enthusiasm for the kids' gifts for you. Hide your hurt feelings when your partner neglected to get you what you asked for. Try to get enough sleep. Don't drink too much at the office party. Try to avoid the sugar blues. Oh, and decorate your yard so your house doesn't look forlorn compared to everyone else's on the block! Go to your house of worship to honor the reason for the season. THEN begin to clean up the mess. Put away the ornaments. Wrap the tree lights carefully so they aren't in a tangle next year. Return or exchange presents that didn't work out...or a different size is needed. And all this time keep up with your work responsibilities.

Are you exhausted yet?

Several years ago I handmade seventeen different items for gifts and baked about 400 of our family's favorite Gingies (a round gingerbread cookie big enough to be a meal with milk or cocoa.) I only felt great relief when the holidays were over.

The following year on November 1st I felt my heart sink. The previous year had not been fun. It had been a valiant attempt to save money while also "be in the Christmas spirit." I didn't want to repeat the experience so I began to search for alternatives. A week or so later I decided on an alternative...a radical one! This year I would conduct an experiment. *I would **only** do what gave me joy.* Nothing but choices/activities that gave me joy. Didn't the angels sing for joy?

But what if I never felt joyful about baking Gingies this year? What would I give the grandkids? How would I decorate? Would the neighbors think I was a Scrooge for my lack of house décor?

I bought a few gorgeous poinsettia plants and placed one on nearly every surface. Bright, cheerful...joyful! I checked in every morning to see if I would enjoy baking cookies that day. Days went by without any desire to bake Gingies. Would we all have to live without them this year? Then a day came when baking Gingies felt like the most joyful thing I could do that day.

The grandkids loved the freedom of buying exactly what they wanted with the gift cards they received. Jim and I walked around the neighborhood enjoying all the brightly lit, creative decorations. We attended worship services where we were truly able to worship because we were relaxed...rested... rather than spending the time surreptitiously making a list of things we still needed to do.

My experiment was such a resounding success that Choosing Joy has been my policy and practice every year since then.

We live in such a high-pressured culture...a “have to” state of emotions. It took courage for me to challenge my holiday patterns and instead of pressure, choose joy. What can you eliminate or alter so that the *quality* of your holiday experience becomes the goal rather than doing everything according to a standard that someone else chose for you? Or maybe in the past all the holiday trimmings were genuinely what you chose and enjoyed. But are you still looking forward to that same pressure to get it all done exactly the “way it has always been?”

If you, like me at one time, find yourself dreading December, determine to make the holiday bend to your desires rather than being turned into a brittle pretzel in order to do the usual.

If you're in a stepfamily, the routines and obligations are even more complex. If you email me personally, I will send you a copy of my **Holiday Survival Guide for Stepfamilies**. Or, it is included in my book, [Stepping TwoGether: Building a Strong Stepfamily](#), Chapter 9. This document is crammed full of practical steps to make the holidays work for you...with JOY!

Leave the madding crowd and join me with smiles on our faces because we implemented a secret strategy! We're calling it Choose Joy!

Nancy Landrum