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Kala Ambrose

Award-winning author, host of the
"Explore Your Spirit with Kala" show

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6 Tips for Setting Your Intentions and Staying Focused This Holiday Season

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The holidays are near, bringing a veritable treat for the mind, body, and spirit as we explore the sights, sounds, tastes, sensations, libations, and feasts of the season. Along with the cheer, this busy time is also centered on overspending on gifts, stressing over family gatherings, and in general not taking the time to enjoy the season. Many see it as a mission with too much to do in a very limited amount of time.

As the new year rolls in, this self-perpetuating cycle finds many people looking at a mountain of debt and feeling completely exhausted. Vowing to do better next year, resolutions are made on New Year's Day in an attempt not to repeat the same mistakes again.

What if, this year, you proactively set your intentions in order to avoid these mistakes before the holidays begin? Here are six tips to setting intentions, designed to help make the holidays happy, fulfilling, and light:

1. Create new traditions.

The holiday season doesn't have to be crammed into just one day. The ancient celebration of Yule, for example, is a 12-day festival. Consider creating new traditions by spreading out the celebrations over multiple days, including having a party on December 21st, leaving December 25th to relax with family at home. There's no need to absorb all the costs for the party either -- invite your guests to bring their favorite dish to share, along with a note card attached to the dish describing why it is meaningful to them at the holidays.

2. Delegate.

A joyous holiday season is not about perfection; it's about the memories created during this time. Share the shopping, wrapping, and decorating with your family and friends. This is an opportunity for children to learn about the spirit of giving and receiving. Hand-wrapped gifts by children are charming and the cookies prepared by your local bakery are just as appreciated, rather than trying to squeeze one more to-do item into your evening.

3. Pay it forward.

The spirit of Santa Claus began with the legend of St. Nicholas, whose generosity led him to fill other's lives with holiday cheer. This spirit of giving lives on in each of us when we engage in this tradition. A recent example of the spirit of giving, Santa Claus style, are the random acts of kindness people display when they walk into stores and pay off layaway accounts of people whom they do not know. It's a powerful reminder that each of us can touch another person's life in a very profound and long-lasting manner.

4. Let peace be with you.

Keeping your body, mind, and spirit relaxed goes a long way in making the holidays fun. Investment experts advise us to pay ourselves first when each paycheck comes in. Perhaps it's time to take this same advice in caring for your well-being. Try some aromatherapy (the scent of peppermint, vanilla, and pine energize and lift the spirit) and set aside the time to have a massage or to take a yoga class to stay refreshed. Your heightened and enlightened mood will be infectious and carry over to others. Don't stress over gift-giving; when pressed for time, a gift card can bring the same excitement and thoughtfulness, sometimes even more as the recipient benefits from using it during the after-Christmas sales, when prices are seriously reduced.

5. Think outside the box.

Rather than focusing on high ticket items that break the budget, go for a less expensive, authentic gift. Maybe it's a friend that loves baseball. Yes, you could buy them expensive tickets to a major league game, but consider purchasing a baseball and glove for your friend and scout out a local park where the two of you could toss the ball. Create two tickets with a day and time and list the park location for an afternoon of catch. Bring along a cooler of your favorite beer and snacks--a simple afternoon in the park can provide just the stress reliever that your friend needs. This also works with hundreds of other activities and is a big hit with nieces, nephews, and grandkids.

6. Give time instead of gifts.

The only thing disappearing quicker than money these days is time. When children and adults are asked what they truly want, the most popular answer is time spent with loved ones. In this age of extreme hustle and bustle, the simplest of gifts become the most extravagant, because it is so rare for anyone to give the gift of time these days.

Time is one gift that doesn't truly expire, as the memories of being together last a lifetime. Consider setting new budget and time-friendly intentions and traditions this year by giving your loved ones the rare gift of time for the holidays. It can be as simple as having morning coffee with a loved one or taking in a matinee. You may be surprised to discover how much it truly means to them -- and to you.

Set good intentions by keeping the focus on the spirit of the season -- your health, your spirits, and your pocketbook will thank you for it!

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