

Readying Your Single Self for the Holidays



By Eleanore Wells

Every year this time we have to think about what to do for the big holiday season. Holidays can be challenging to just about everybody. There are decisions to be made, plans put in place, and money to be spent. And while this is true for everyone, many single people feel an extra layer of stress.

In fact, I heard from a single friend who is feeling particularly lonely and is dreading the coming holiday season. She isn't close to her family and the holidays are a time that kinda puts a spotlight on it. I, teasingly, reminded her of Cameron Diaz and Kerry Washington, two sexy ladies who have described themselves as "happily single." I said, "Do you think Cameron and Kerry are worried about the holidays? I'll bet they're looking forward to the festivities...and you should be, too."

I reminded her that she should put her friends to good use. Having a variety of friends can help a lot this time of year. Even though she has kids, I know Gayle King will be taking in some of the festivities with Oprah and Steadman. It helps to have people you like to hang out with. And isn't that what the holiday season should be about: spending time with special people? I know that's not what it's always about, but that's what it *should* be about. I'm a proponent of avoiding people who don't make me happy. If I can't avoid them completely, Plan B is to spend as little time with them as possible.

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I'm fortunate to have a loving network of people around me. I make it work. I host Thanksgiving for what I call my "straggler" friends: it includes single people, those who can't or don't want to get with their family, people whose plans changed at the last minute, and couples without children. (I have to draw the line somewhere).

Christmas I spend it with my family and I'm not really expected to do much except show up. But there's always what to do about New Year's Eve. I never want to spend it alone, but I don't always want a big party either. When I have a beau, I spend it with him. When I don't, it's with cool friends whose company I really enjoy. I won't spend New Year's Eve with people who aren't special to me. That's not how I want to bring in the New Year.

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The holidays get a bad rap, though, because they're often quite good: there's the feeling of festivity in the air, the parties, the gifts, the music, and catching up with people you like but haven't seen in awhile. And some things about being

single are actually better during the holidays because we have more flexibility and fewer rules about what one is supposed to do. Here are a few:

- You don't *have* to get a tree. Trees are festive, but the needles, the watering, and the space it takes up –especially in a small apartment—well, they're a lot of work. If you have kids and/or a husband, you might not be able to get away with not having a tree. It would be way too bah humbug. But when you're single, you can be more creative. Put up a wreath, buy a few poinsettias...and done!

- You don't have to spend a whole lot of time in one place. As a single person, it's very believable that you have additional plans, and that's why you can't spend the entire day at Aunt Mary's. Take advantage of that. Stop by for a while, hug everyone, have a glass of something...and then be on your way.

- No baking or cooking. And if you do, people make a very big deal about it. "Wow, look at what the single lady pulled off?"

- And just as good, no one really expects you to send holiday cards. These days, holiday photos of well-dressed children and/or children placed in really cool, interesting spots (at the family beach house, Macchu Picchu, etc.) are the norm. If you don't have children, no need to send a card. No postage, no paper waste, and no idea-generation on cute outfits or cool spots for the pictures. If you're married and don't send cards, you could be stricken from every card list, no matter how old or dear the friendship. But as a single person, no one seems to mind.

- You don't have to accompany the husband or kids to parties you don't really want to go to.

- No in-laws to fight with or about. This is always an issue with my married friends and they tell me this fight can get

old really quickly...and yet it must be had every year.

The holidays should be fun. I think it's important to *manage* situations that you don't enjoy.

As a single person, I think it's particularly important to nurture your relationships because I really don't think we're necessarily supposed to go through life completely alone and that's where good friends come in...during the holidays, and all the other days.

Don't lose your mojo by dreading the holidays. Celebrate in a way that works for you! Happy Holidays!

Read more about the joys and realities of being single in Eleanore's book "The Spinsterlicious Life: 20 Life Lessons for Living Happily Single and Childfree", her very popular blog, The Spinsterlicious Life at www.EleanoreWells.com/blog, and her Spinsterlicious Facebook Fan Page.