

Holiday Do's and Don'ts



1. DO PLAY NICE WITH THE IN-LAWS.

It's the time of year to pretend that you appreciate your mother-in-law's "compliments" and that you don't notice how your sister-in-law can't open her mouth without complaining. Try to let the little annoyances go for a few weeks. Heck, there's a bar at most holiday parties for a reason.

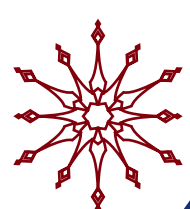
2. DON'T GET TOO CLOSE.

I recently read a "Dear Abby" column that involved a woman wondering why everyone thought it was weird that she went on a Caribbean vacation with her father-in-law — and only her father-in-law. (The husband and mother-in-law stayed home.) Most of us don't need to pinpoint the why, we just know that it's creepy. Being too close with the in-laws is how you end up on Jerry Springer.



3. DO MAKE LOTS OF TIME FOR THE FAMILY.

The holidays were meant for family and friends. Go to all the parties you can. Call up distant cousins. Sing "Jingle Bells" in rounds. Compliment your aunt's cheese log. Get seconds and thirds at Grandma's.



4.

DON'T ONLY SPEND TIME WITH YOUR FAMILY.

Matching sweaters, marching through the neighborhood and singing in unison in its most innocent form is caroling. In its most menacing, it's a religious cult. If any of the extended fam talks about building a compound, it's probably time for a break (unless you're a Kennedy). And, remember that "the family" is also a euphemism for the mafia. Beware anyone bearing the gift of cement shoes.

5.

DO SPLURGE A LITTLE.

An extra helping of macaroni and cheese here. A few more dollars for that extra special present there. It's OK to allow yourself some added indulgences at the holidays.



6.

DON'T TURN IT INTO A BACCHANAL.

Your credit limit is not a challenge, lap bands are not stocking stuffers and teetotalers will remember what you did at the office party. There is life after the holidays, and the last time we checked, Birmingham bears very little resemblance to Las Vegas — especially if you're not leaving town come January 1.

7.

DO REMEMBER THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

It isn't all about gifts, booze, bonuses, Santa, reindeer and magic elves. Spirituality, custom and tradition all matter, too. Take some quiet time out to remember why this time of year is special and meaningful.



8.

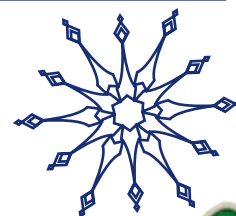
DON'T FEEL PERSONALLY OBLIGATED TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE ELSE REMEMBERS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

We're all grown-ups here. Even if you're pretty sure that your neighbor/child's teacher/dry cleaner is way too wrapped up in the commercialization of the holidays, it's usually best to keep that info to yourself. Save the sermons and hand-outs for a receptive audience.

9.

DO MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT.

Revel in holiday magic as long as you can.



10.

DON'T CARRY IT INTO THE NEW YEAR.

Lights and décor need to come down once the holidays are over. And there's no need for any kind of countdown that begins with "Only 364 shopping days left ..." We do have 11 other months after all.

