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Boldly Breaking With Tradition This Holiday Season

Marin Rose



There's a lot to be said for tradition. Our familial and cultural traditions define us in some ways. They provide stability and continuity in a chaotic world. When it comes to the holiday season, though, there's also a lot to be said for trying something new, especially when it means saving ourselves and our families some stress.

At this time of year many of us expend a lot of time, money and energy shopping, decorating, cooking and entertaining. In reference to taxing holiday tasks such as sending greeting cards, decking the house with boughs of everything, and engaging in activities related to "The Elf on the Shelf," too many of us feel that we simply "have to."

I'd like to remind anyone feeling burdened by such expectations that there's nothing much in life that you "have to" do. Bailing on your taxes might incur some pretty undesirable consequences but it's a choice that's yours to make. The ramifications of skipping a holiday tradition might stir up some controversy in your household but you won't end up incarcerated. Probably.

Here are three key reasons to risk the consequences of a change this holiday season, which you can use to assuage the disappointment of anyone who complains.

Forsaking a few traditions can save time, money and energy – and reduce stress for everyone. If all the work that leads up to the holidays drains your pockets and your energy, you'll be less capable of relaxing with loved ones. Offer one less dish at Christmas dinner, one less layer of tinsel – and instead be a rested, peaceful presence among your family. Play "Secret Santa" instead of exchanging multiple gifts. It's fun and it

saves a lot of time and money.

Individual holidays are more memorable when they're slightly different each year. Experiences are more memorable, more enduring, when they're a little different. My early years of Christmas celebrations at my paternal grandmother's house in New Jersey are warm but almost entirely indistinguishable from one another. Christmas 1980 looked a lot like Christmas 1990 – just with different, awful jeans. More vivid are my later Christmases: "the year we drove to mom's brother's house in Florida," "the year we caught a matinee of Radio City's Christmas Spectacular in New York" and "the year of our Caribbean cruise."

Your break with tradition might not be as drastic as mine have been. Maybe 2014 will go down in family history as "the year we had spaghetti" or "the year we did Secret Santa."

Fewer expectations usually result in more enjoyment. Too often we're oppressed by our own histories, striving to recreate cherished moments from the past. Specific expectations for how a moment will look and feel set us up for disillusionment at best and disappointment at worst. Give your kids and your guests a chance to anticipate the holidays without the weight of preconceived notions.

Give yourself permission to stray from strict adherence to tradition this year. You might find that something different is just as rewarding for everyone, if not more so, than the same old, same old.

Questions for Marin? Inquire at info@libraorganizing.com for a response in next month's column.



Marin Rose owns *Libra Organizing*, an Augusta-based organizing, home staging and move assistance business. Marin serves clients throughout the CSRA, as well as in her hometown of Washington, D.C., New York and beyond. For more information, including notices of free seminars and community events, or to hire Marin to speak at your event or organization, visit libraorganizing.com.