

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

October 9, 2007

This Week's Message:

**Plan Now for Lower
Stress Holidays.**

Paths Forward

Resources

**Have Dr. Paul speak
at your next meeting
or conference.**

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Plan Now for Lower Stress Holidays.

One thing that really annoys me is when I start seeing those back to school ads on television right after the 4th of July or when the seasonal shopping ads start right as the summer draws to a close. However, one Christmas catalog that recently arrived in the mail got me thinking. Its cover headline read "This Year Create the Holidays You've Always Wanted". Though I probably won't be purchasing the Paul

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Bunyon sized containers of junk food it was hawking, the sentiment in that headline is well worth considering.

As year's end and the holiday season approaches I typically receive a number of emails and a handful of speaking requests asking me to address the issue of "holiday stress". Unfortunately, it is difficult to lower one's stress when already in the midst of a stressful schedule of shopping, entertaining, decorating, and often-conflicting holiday demands from work, family and friends. Thus, it makes great self-care sense to take time now, well before the holiday hurly-burly begins, to plan for a holiday season of your own design that reflects your values, your desires, and your vision of what the holidays truly mean to you.

Paths Forward

- **Revisit Holidays Past.** Calmly, with no blaming, recriminations (or rose colored glasses), engage those closest to you in a remembrance and discussion of holidays from past years. What worked or didn't work? What traditions are worth keeping or better forgotten? What was really fun and what was really stressful? Ask, "For us, what would a great, meaningful, less stressful holiday season look like?" "What creative ideas can we generate to create a holiday of our own design?" "How can we say "no" to external holiday demands in a way that is mindful of the feelings of others?"
- **Holidays At Work.** With the best of intentions many employers plan holiday parties even though they are rather stressful events for many employees. Career common sense dictates that, if possible, you attend. But this does not mean that you have to spend a fortune on a new outfit or hairstyle nor arrive early, eat or drink everything in sight, stay late or compete wildly in the limbo contest. If your best pals are all from work and this is an event that you look forward to with glee then go for it (within reason). But otherwise make an appearance, find and greet those whom you want or feel you need to see, stay for an socially acceptable amount of time and slip away unannounced unless it is absolutely necessary to plead a prior family or church commitment.
- **Gift Giving.** Gift giving is an integral part of the holiday season. For some it is an all too rare opportunity to express personal thanks for the love, friendship or support received during the year. But for others it is a trap or an excuse to run up credit card bills that erode one's financial health. We

live in culture of full closets, full cellars and full attics. Now there is an entire industry (self-storage rental units) for people to store "stuff" for which they no longer have room in their homes. Is a store bought gift really necessary? Does that chocolate fountain or cannoli press really express what you have in mind? Wouldn't your loved one really prefer something personal even if it is just a plate of deformed, home-made cookies or a customized gift certificate for help cleaning gutters, a night of baby-sitting or a back rub? Certainly some shopping is usually required so start your list now and peck away at it as sales arise. Consider shopping online with reputable companies that can save you time, energy, money (if you're careful) and shipping charges.

• **What Are You Teaching The Kids?** By your example are you teaching your children that the holidays are a stress and chore filled season of frantic shopping, excessive spending, obsessive decorating, extravagant entertaining and over-indulgent eating and drinking? Or are they learning that holidays are times when family and friends can meet, relax and enjoy each other's company. Have they become so infected by our consumer culture that they are more concerned with what they are getting than they are by what they are giving? Or do they have a giving or charity list compiled alongside their Santa's list? Are you playing the "Bottomless Bank of Mom and Dad" or are your kids earning some money of their own and learning realistic budgeting to give gifts that are really from them? Have you found yourself loading up trash bags or boxes with barely used toys, unread books, and unneeded clothes to donate or dispose of? Every child deserves a few Christmas, Hanukkah or holiday presents or toys. But by burying children in piles of gifts we detract from the value of each as they quickly turn their gaze from one present to the next and to the next because we are teaching them that more is better and that more is never enough.

• **Traditions - Old and New.** Do your holiday traditions fit you or are they mere habits or, even worse, dreaded chores? For some it's time to winnow down the holiday card list or cut out Christmas cards altogether. For others it's a once in a year effort to stay connected. Driving two hours out to Uncle Bozo's farm in the country may be a treasured memory you want to pass down to your children or it could merely be four hours of terrible traffic in typically bad weather. As to holiday traditions I say "Keep the best, divest

the rest". And why not start some traditions of your own whether they be traditional (like caroling), socially conscious (like volunteering at a soup kitchen), a "two-fer" event (like inviting friends over to bake batches of holiday cookies or wrap presents together), or a just a cozy, family night at home (with popcorn and a favorite holiday movie, be it "It's a Wonderful Life", "Scrooged", "Yentl" or "Lawrence of Arabia").

• **Good Enough is Good Enough.** It's probably "a good thing" to realize that Martha Stewart is surrounded by a whole boatload of highly trained professionals whose job it is to make her apparent perfection look effortless. But, c'mon, let's take a hard look at *your* support team. I'm sure you love them all but I doubt they could mow Martha's lawn to her standards, never mind throw a dinner party for ten! So why not consider a buffet or a potluck. This year let the kids wrap the presents - using the Sunday funnies for paper. (Hint: have lots and lots of tape!) Delegate, offload, forget, or ignore holiday chores that make you anxious, unhappy or stressed. Learn to say "no" with a sad smile and the genuine excuse that "I just wish I had more time". If you still dream of those picture perfect Currier and Ives holidays remember - those were the days before central heat, indoor plumbing, penicillin and the TV remote control. Like the song says, "*These are the good, old days*". Plan now to make this holiday season one you'll remember always.

LifeMap is about taking personal responsibility for creating one's own life - during the holidays and throughout the entire year.

Resources

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

To order the best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. "Winning Job Interviews: Reduce Interview Anxiety, Outprepare the Other Candidates, Land the Job You Love" by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of "Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love" by Dr Paul Powers, click the link below.

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Sincerely,

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