8 Ways To Regain Your Peace Of Mind This Holiday Season

Yes folks, the holiday season is once again upon us.

You probably already knew that; but I thought I'd tell you anyway. Sometimes, I wonder myself if we're really in the holiday season, or if I'm just getting ahead of myself. It always seems like the year goes by so quickly.

The holiday season can be a hard time for many people. While some thoroughly enjoy it, they do so at a price. Then there are those who suffer through it, due to some deep underlying problem. Most often, that's due to suffering some sort of loss.

But you and I don't have to suffer. We don't have to allow the holidays to become a problem for us. We can enjoy them, without the problems that most people experience. All it takes is using a little wisdom and putting together a reasonable game plan.

Budget Wisely

Probably the biggest problem most people have with the holidays is that they can't afford it. As a culture, we've developed the idea that you have to spend a lot on the holidays, especially Christmas, or you're not doing it right. Our love for each other is measured in dollar signs, not in anything of substance.

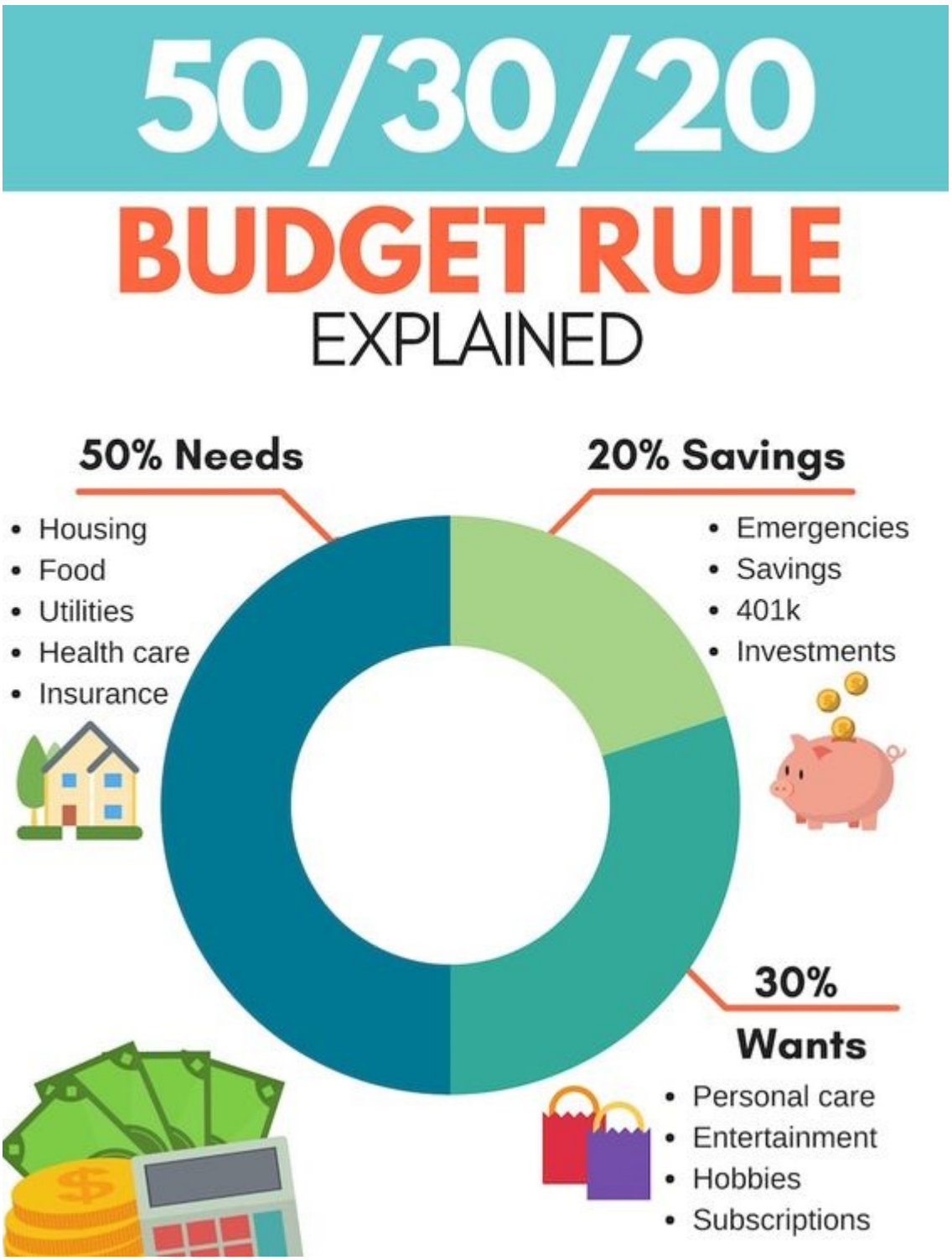
Many people go horribly in debt, spending money on unwanted gifts, often bought for people we'd rather not buy them for.

If there’s anywhere that the materialism of our society is on display, it’s the Christmas shopping season.

But you don’t have to spend a fortune on presents, to show people you love them. Many families have decided on gift-giving schemes where they draw names and only buy a gift for the person whose name they drew. Others just buy for the children, with the adults foregoing gifts so that they can afford to treat the children well.

My favorite method of saving money on gift-giving is to make gifts. While I still buy some gifts, everyone I’m buying gifts for is also receiving something I’ve made myself. That allows me to spread my money farther, avoid going bankrupt and still give nice gifts to everyone in my family. Hand-made gifts are generally the best received gifts there are.

Did you ever receive a handmade card from one of your children? If you have, I’m sure you’ve treasured that. Why? Was it due to their great artwork or was it because they put a piece of their heart into it? A hand-made gift doesn’t have to be perfect to be givable; it has to be made with love.



Granted, I’m sure you’d want to give something that is well made. I know I do. That’s why I take the time to make the gifts I make
carefully, crafting them well. I also make sure that it’s something I know how
to do, rather than choosing this time of year to try a new experiment. The
experiment can wait till later.

There were a number of years in which the only gifts we gave were home-baked goods. We'd make several different types of cookies, fudge, some other candies, and some sort of bread (like cranberry bread); sometimes we'd even make fruitcake. That's what went out to all the relatives, bosses, friends and co-workers. And you know something? We never received a complaint. Rather, we received a lot of compliments on the gifts.

Regifting is another great way of saving money. I'm not talking about giving away the ugly sweater you got, which nobody else will want. Although I will have to say, those white elephant gift exchanges seem like they were made just for getting rid of things that nobody wants. I wouldn't be surprised if some of those gifts have been regifted many times over.

You Don't Have to Freak Out About Gifts

Some people take gift giving all too seriously. Granted, we all like receiving a nice gift and look forward to opening them on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning, depending on your family's traditions. But that doesn't mean that we have to stress out, picking the perfect gift for everyone. Gift cards are a great way to give, without having to spend a long time antagonizing over your selections. And you know something? They're always

appreciated.

I like giving gift cards, along with another small gift, usually a hand-made one. That way, they've got a physical reminder of my love for them, as well as the opportunity to get something they'll like. For people who are hard to buy for, gift cards are even better, as you'll never find the right gift anyway.

Don't be Alone

If the holiday season is difficult for you, the worst thing you can do is to be alone. We humans are social creatures and when we're alone, we tend to be miserable. This is especially true for those who live alone; whether that is due to being single, the loss of a loved one or divorce.

Holidays are an especially difficult time for these people to be alone, especially since holidays are often thought of as a time for family. So what do these people do? Where are their families?

In many cases, these people don't have a family; or if they do, they can't travel to see them. Instead, they spend the holidays alone, either depressed, drunk or working to pretend that the it really isn't a holiday.

If you find yourself in this position, don’t stay alone. Don’t stay home from the of

fice Christmas party, just because you don’t want to be along. Rather, find someon

e
to
be
wi
th
.
Ta
ke
a
fr
ie
nd
wi
th
yo
u
to
th
at
pa
rt
y.
Yo
u
ar
en
’t
th
e
on
ly
lo
ne
ly
pe
rs
on

there is. In fact, you're surrounded by them. If nobody else is doing something fo

r
yo
u
to
go
to
,
op
en
yo
ur
ho
me
an
d
in
vi
te
ot
he
rs
wh
o
ar
e
al
on
e
to
be
wi
th
yo
u.

My family has long had the custom of opening up our home to those who are single at holiday time. There have been times

when as many as
half of the people gathered around the (extended) dining table are people we
hardly know. They are there, because we opened up our home to them.

Who do you know who might be alone this Christmas? Is there something you can do about it? Can you fit another couple of chairs around the
dining table? Is there an empty seat in your living room, while you share
stories, watch the game or watch some Christmas special? If so, invite someone
to take that seat, so that they aren't alone.

Prioritize Your Commitments

Some of us have the opposite problem. Rather than being alone for Christmas, we find that there isn't enough time to go to all the
different things we're invited to. I've suddenly found myself in that position,
since marrying my second wife. She's well known and liked and seems to get
invited to everything.

As much as we'd like to, it's not always possible to go to everything. The problem comes when we feel the pressure to go, even though we
don't have the time. That can put a strain on our time or on the relationships
we have with others. At times, we can find ourselves going to events we'd
rather avoid, just so that we don't offend anyone.

The other part of the problem is that every one of those events ends up costing something, adding to our already stretched budget. We

always ask if we should bring something, just to be polite. Even if they say
“No,” we bring something anyway. We also bring along a hostess gift, even if
there isn’t any sort of gift exchange going on. But it seems like there’s
always something, even if it’s just a “white elephant” gift exchange.

The key here is to decide ahead-of-time what our priorities are for the holiday season. That way, when invitations come, we already have an
idea of which ones we should accept and which ones we can politely bow out of.

If the holidays are about family, then that’s where we want to prioritize. If that means there isn’t time for the guy you went to high
school with, but haven’t seen in ten years, so be it.

Avoid Politics

Some liberal outlets are encouraging people to use the holidays as a time to talk about political issues, enlightening their
conservative family members. I suppose that’s a good idea, if you want to spoil
the holidays for everyone. But if you want to have a peaceful, enjoyable
holiday visit, then leave your politics at the door.

I have family members who at the opposite side of the political spectrum from me. The way I deal with that is that I just don’t talk
about politics with them. When they try to talk about anything that is
political, I simply say, “Let’s change the subject.” If they continue, I say it

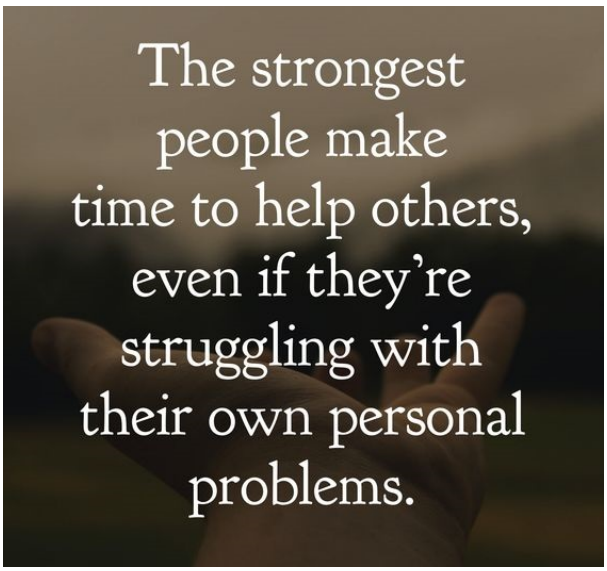
again. If they won’t quit, I just walk off.

I am no more likely to swing their viewpoints than they are to swing mine; so why bother? Now, if they want to have an adult conversation about things we don’t agree on, I’m there. But that’s not usually what it is. There is no law that says you have to participate in a conversation which consists of nothing more than them insulting you and calling you names because you don’t see things their way.

This concept doesn’t just apply to politics; it can apply to other areas as well. But as our country has become more politically divided, this is the one area where we are most likely to run across this problem. So be ready to walk out of a conversation, if that’s what it takes.

Help Each Other

If you haven’t figured it out yet, making it through the holiday season can be highly stressful. This is probably more true for women, than it is for men. That’s because women are the ones who do a lot of what makes holidays special, like cooking that big Thanksgiving or Christmas meal.



One of the best things in life is having someone to share it with. That's especially

true when it comes to sharing burdens. If you find that your spouse is overburdened by

any part of the holiday season, look for what you can do to help. If you're not su

re
,
as
k;
I’
m
su
re
th
ey
’l
l
te
ll
yo
u.

My wife and I try to do as much of the holiday work together, rather than just having it fall on one or the other of us. In working this way, we not only spread the burden out, but we turn everything into an opportunity to do things together. That makes everything from shopping, to wrapping gifts to baking cookies more fun.

Find Things to be Happy About

No matter how bad things are, there are always things you can be happy about. Focus on those things.

The world we live in tends to be negative. But that doesn’t mean you have to be negative along with it. You can choose to be positive, rather than negative. Change your outlook and focus on the good; stop focusing on the bad. If the news makes you depressed, turn it off. I’ll

guarantee you,
if something is important enough that you need to know about it, someone will
tell you.

Make a Plan and Stick to It

Finally, before you get bogged down in the holiday rush,
take some time to sit down as a couple or as a family and make a plan. Decide
what you are going to do to celebrate the holidays and write it down. Then
stick with that plan. At least, stick with it as much as you can.

Include some time of rest in that plan. There’s going to be plenty to make you tired. Scheduling in some rest will make it much easier to
deal with all the busyness of the holidays.

Yes, I know there are always things that come along, which require changes to the best of plans. That’s okay. You can be flexible. But at least having a plan will help you to decide what things are worth changing the plan for. If you don’t have a plan, then you’re subject to being blown about by whatever comes along.