



## Have Yourself a Generative Holiday Season

Many years ago, a character in a cartoon strip quipped, "Christmas is almost at our throats." When life seems full already, the holiday season may indeed be met with something other than unmitigated glee.

This is a good time to remember that each of us is the author of our lives, and that what we do during the holidays (as well as what we DON'T do) can be a matter of choice.

### *What is the point?*

Before leaping into a long "to-do" list of holiday "musts" and chores, we invite you to step back and create for yourself a clear vision of the outcomes you choose for yourself this season. Before even listing things to do, begin by capturing the experience you seek to create during the holidays.

For example, rather than "buy gifts for everyone I know," you might phrase your intended results as "celebrate this holiday season in a spirit of

warmth and relationship," and "use the opportunity of this season to have those dear to me know how much I appreciate them."

Your first order of business is to clarify exactly *why* you will do whatever you do, so that your purpose is clear. A clear purpose will not only shape what you choose to do. It will also make everything you do that much more potent, as it will be imbued with your intention and not merely done to "get through it."

### *What will make the difference, really?*

With your end in mind, choose projects and priorities that will fulfill them. Consciously weed out things you could do but that are not necessary to accomplish your intention. For example, you could make your own wrapping paper or holiday cards; however, such a project will not necessarily increase your ability to accomplish your objective AND it could leave you with little energy to enjoy

your holiday season.

Consider plans or actions that are "cost-effective" in terms of the return you will receive on your energy investment. Infusing your home with festive aromas can be done by simmering a small package of mulling spices on your stove top, or by baking cookies for days on end. Which approach will be most satisfying and fulfilling for you? How much baking or decorating is enough to give you an experience of festivity without contributing to a sense of overwhelm? Similarly, consider how you might communicate your appreciation of the people in your life, even as you keep your holiday projects simple.

*Whatever you choose to include in your holidays will be exactly right, if it is indeed a choice rather than something you think you SHOULD be doing.*

## *Enjoy yourself!*

A fulfilling holiday season is one that is not only purposeful but enjoyable. To make the season enjoyable, be sure you are taking on no more than can be included comfortably in your life. Also, be sure to include in your overall design that which will nurture your body and spirit. Consciously take care of YOU in the process. And savor everything you do, being mindful of what you are really creating — a holiday season that makes the very difference you mean it to make.

## Orientation of New Board Members

Serving on the board of directors of a nonprofit organization can be extremely rewarding and satisfying. Being a board member gives us an opportunity to contribute to our community and to express our personal commitments and vision.

Being an effective board member often is a function of how thorough an orientation we receive once we are elected to the board. Creating an effective orientation program for new board members is often overlooked in nonprofit organizations. And, it is one of the keys to having new board members be effective quickly.

Here are some key ingredients

for any board member orientation program:

1. Provide each director with a board manual, and ensure that it is a powerful resource for new board members.

Include such items as:

- History of the agency
- Current bylaws
- Policies and procedures
- Annual budget
- Minutes of recent Board meetings
- Board committee structure, responsibilities and members
- Brief synopsis of agency programs
- Map of facilities (if needed)
- Roster of Board members

2. Ensure that all directors are clear about what is expected of them. Have new board members attend a meeting on the responsibilities of a board of directors and on the responsibilities of *individual* board members. Include resource materials such as *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*, published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB). Another terrific orientation resource is the video *Meeting the Challenge* produced by NCNB.

3. Provide a “buddy” or mentor for new board members. Pair new board members with experienced ones. The mentor supports the new member in completing the orientation program, answers questions

about the agency and supports the new member in becoming an effective board member.

4. Give each new board member a guided tour of all agency facilities. Have a checklist of items to be covered at each site. (This might be coordinated by a board development committee member, who would escort incoming members on site visits.)

5. Have board members become familiar with agency programs by volunteering with one or more programs or by meeting with senior program staff. Consider including in each board meeting an in-depth review of one agency program as an ongoing aspect of board development.

6. Arrange question and answer sessions about board work and activities for new board members.

7. Create a time line for each new board member to complete the orientation program.

These suggestions certainly aren't exhaustive; however, they provide useful and immediate approaches for assimilating new board members quickly. We know from our own experience as board members that an effective board orientation program is crucial. It gives a new director a sense of being on the team

and being able to make a real contribution to the agency.

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