

Lisa blogs about her holiday rules to enjoy happy holidays, which include paying it forward, Christmas safety tips, & why cooking a turkey isn't mandatory.

Rules to live by for the Holiday season

Lisa Van Meeteren

Eat drink and be merry:

I have no problem with the eating and drinking part. Got that down to a cookie filled, red wine flowing science. It's the whole "merry" part of holiday entertaining. It's tough to be merry when your pants are tight, your kids are hopped up on sugar and people turn into these alien beings programmed to run around the mall and take other people out to get the last iPad in aquamarine blue. But this year I vow to try by wearing stretch pants (as long as they are not paired with a festive reindeer sweater-rule #2?), smiling at people in mall line ups and reminding myself it's about the children.

Be kind to your fellow man or thou shalt not run over old ladies in mall parking lots:

Really I saw this happen last Christmas. Someone was rushing for a parking spot and almost ran over an elderly lady who was walking towards the mall. Now I don't know about you but I think there is a special down below for those who take out old people at Christmas time. Yes, we are all hurrying this time of year as time seems to speed up and to-do lists seem to expand but killing thy fellow man probably won't win you any brownie points with the big guy. And no I don't mean Santa.

It is better to give than to receive

Did you ever notice how people rarely give or do something thoughtful unless they get something in return? Not this time of year! The holiday season reminds us to give just for the sake of giving-donating toys to those without, offering time or food to a shelter, and remembering to leave a bigger tip than normal at Starbucks. I tried to pay it forward the other day but judging from the reaction I got, I guess it's too early. I asked to pay for the person behind me in the line at Tim Hortons and the lady looked at me like I'd asked her if she wouldn't mind if I got down to my skivvies and did a dance on the hood of my car. I also saw her deliberating with the customer behind me telling her that her order was paid for and she was probably demanding but why? This seems to be the time of year that you can be nice to your fellow man without them wondering if you're just trying to sell them an upgraded cable package or if you're shifty. Take advantage of it. It feels good.

Thou shalt not freak out over turkey

I have a confession to make. I have only cooked a whole turkey, ONCE. And I vowed that I wouldn't do it again. I find the entire process of cooking a turkey intimidating. First there's the calculations you have to make that are akin to NASA to ensure that it will be cooked on time. At fifteen minutes a pound, in a 350

degree oven, travelling at 100 miles an hour what time do you have to put a 15 pound turkey in to be cooked by 5:00...

Whatever formula I used the year of the turkey (as I like to refer to it) didn't work. The thing was still mostly raw by 7 pm and I fed the kids hot dogs opting for deli meat over salmonella and put them to bed. Now I use turkey rolls which is just the breast part of the meat and while I know my parents would probably prefer a turkey and they went to all that work for me over the years I also know my limits. I will not whip up my grandmother's homemade pumpkin pie recipe and cook a fifty pound bird.

Thou shalt carry hand sanitizer and stay home when you have the flu

Tis the season....to share germs. Use hand sanitizer and wash your hands a lot! And if you do happen to get sick please don't share the wealth...we spend a lot of time together in closed quarters this time of year- at work, at the mall...and yes there are times when you have to go somewhere but if you don't and you're truly sick STAY HOME!

I saw a commercial the other day for a cold and flu medication which had this guy who looked like death and the voice over said, "you have things to do, so take this medication and get on with your day" and then suddenly the same dude is going to work and then on a date and I'm thinking AAAH! You're still sick! He feels great until the drugs wear off but it doesn't make him less contagious. And now he's just infected his entire office and his main squeeze. If you have the flu, adhere to these Christmas safety tips: take a day off, wrap a hot towel around your head (shout out to Ferris Bueller fans) and watch some reality TV, sports or whatever it is you're into while sipping hot tea and loading up on Vitamin C. Then when you don't have a fever and aren't contagious rejoin the rest of the world. The malls aren't going anywhere and if you really need to shop then online shopping works wonders.

Enjoy the company of friends and neighbours

This the time of the year to be social and while surviving the holidays can be overwhelming as the calendar overflows with engagements just remember that hibernation is coming. Winter is long and many of us hole up into our houses until Spring or wrap ourselves up in layers of clothing until we are unrecognizable, giving each other a quick Michelin man greeting as we tackle our snow covered drive-ways. Human contact, the kind that exists outside of the cyber world is healthy and even helps with managing anxiety just as long as you follow the rule above.

And that's it. The holiday rules I like to live by. This holiday season try to live by your own rules, or use some of mine if they resonate with you, but remember above all no matter what happens it's about spending time with those you love and being grateful for what you have...and wearing really stretchy pants. Happy Holidays!