

Written by Nadine Bubeck

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The holidays can be stressful—a time when many parents feel physically, emotionally, and financially drained.

According to a survey from [Experian](#), 60% of consumers think holiday shopping is a strain, and almost half feel obligated to spend more than they can afford. This, so they say, leads to seasonal anxiety.

But I'm not here to write a total buzzkill of a post.

Instead, I have simple, budget-friendly ways your family can savor the season without breaking the bank or over-stressing.

### 1. Decorate cookies

Don't make it complicated: buy ready-to-bake cookie dough. They're now sold in sheets, easy for cookie cutting. Frost them and let your kids go to town decorating with M&Ms, chocolate chips and sprinkles. Toddlers will enjoy getting messy; tweens will enjoy getting artsy; and you'll enjoy eating the finished product. (You can also find Gingerbread House kits for under \$10.)

### 2. Do something good

When I was a kid, my mom brought my sisters and me volunteering every holiday season. We brought goodies to a retirement community, and sang songs while my mom played the guitar. Giving back feels good—and it will give your family a deeper appreciation for what you have. Here's a thought: ask your kids to each choose a toy of their own to donate every year.

### 3. Start a simple seasonal tradition

I'm in the process of building our "holiday book collection." Every night, my husband and I read holiday-inspired stories to our boys. This is a good time to familiarize them with Frosty, Rudolph, and Santa. After Christmas, I put our collection away until the following year, as these "special books" only come out during the month of December.

### 4. Do a PJ cruise around the neighborhood

I grew up in the Bay Area (Northern California). I'll never forget—every year we would put on pajamas and drive the 30 minutes to Palo Alto's Christmas Tree Lane, a neighborhood full of beautifully lit houses. Take your kids on a drive to look at lights—it's something they'll enjoy and remember forever. Oh, and blast Christmas music to get in the spirit.

### 5. Watch the traditional movies

Our DVR is full of Christmas specials and cartoons... my son is now obsessed with *The Grinch*. Indulge in some family TV time—snuggle on the couch with your little ones. Make some hot chocolate. There's nothing wrong with being cliché.

### 6. Decorate

Don't be such a Scrooge. Get a tree. Make some ornaments. Hang some lights in the backyard so you can enjoy them from your window. Light an evergreen-scented candle. A little goes a long way, and it really makes your house feel homey.

### 7. Organize a gift exchange

If you have a big family, take the load off and draw Secret Santas. There's no use in over buying (and over spending). If you have a small family, set a budget for gifts. Instead of giving your significant other a material item, plan a date night. Quality time is a present in itself, especially for parents with young kids!

### 8. Be thankful...and write it down

Focus on things to be thankful for by having each member of your family write down one thing they're grateful for each day of December. Display your thankful lists, and be sure to pack them carefully when you put away your decorations. You'll enjoy reading your list collection over the years. This can easily be done with post-its.

[About Nadine](#)

[Nadine Bubeck](#) is a multi-media personality, author, blogger, PR pro, speaker, and blessed boy [mom](#). The TV News anchor turned all things mama contributes to numerous publications and is often utilized on TV as a [parenting](#) expert. Her niche: everything [mom](#), [baby](#), [toddler](#), [child](#).

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