

## I Hate the Holidays

Depression. Anger. Sadness. We don't often acknowledge this side of the holidays, but these are clear and present signs of the season just the same. In fact, between stress, lack of sleep and emotional family events, some studies indicate that as many as one in five Americans suffer from mild to serious depression during the Christmas holiday season – and many of them are women.

There are different ways to combat the negative impact of the holidays. For example, experts advise that you be more realistic with expectations, spend less money so you don't start the New Year in debt, and find new traditions that are more satisfying. Each of these tips is worth doing, combining them is even better.

However, one of the most powerful ways to combat holiday stress and related depression is to have something good to look forward to in the New Year. When you put something positive and hopeful ahead of you, you are more likely to focus on it rather than the stressful holiday events are weakening and destabilizing. So, when Aunt Millie wants to know why you didn't make her favorite fruitcake, or the kids break the toys and your mother thinks you could have done everything better if only you did it her way, you can remind yourself that the New Year already holds the promise of a happier you.

Sound good? Then start today! December 13 is Make Up Your Mind Day - the perfect time to decide what will give you a happier experience in the New Year – and then make up your mind to do it!

What's bugging you now that you want to change? Are you angry that you don't take any time for yourself, that nobody helps around the house or that everybody seems to think you don't have anything else to do but wait around to take them someplace, pick them up, buy them something, etc.

What would make your life better in the New Year? Choose one goal and make it your new reality with the Savvy Woman's A, B, C's: ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOR, and COMMUNICATION

### **A is for ATTITUDE Make up your mind to develop An ATTITUDE that supports your new direction**

The word ATTITUDE means the thoughts and feelings that make up your mind-set or way of thinking. Your attitude at the beginning of the day determines how well every day turns out...and much you can improve your life. A positive change of attitude is consciously making an agreement with yourself to do, be and have more than you do now.

Here are two fast and easy ways to shift your attitude to support your new direction - and both are done before you even get out of bed:

1 - Greet the day by acknowledging that you are grateful for what you have. The attitude of gratitude can be an eye-opening and uplifting experience. If you have a little trouble thinking about what you can be grateful for, here are some ideas: good health, your home, spouse, or children, the bed you sleep in and the covers that keep you warm, or the

sunrise or sunset. You can even have gratitude that you alone have the power to choose your thoughts because no matter what, no one can choose your thoughts for you.

2 - Affirm your intention for the day. Embrace yourself and your life by clearly telling yourself what you expect for the day. You can make up your own, or choose one of these:

- My life is happy and I am healthy and strong and that includes today
- I choose only those thoughts that reflect a happy and healthy life.
- Whatever happens today, I focus on being happy [or peaceful, or loved, or whatever you really want]
- Today gives me a happy surprise and I look for it
- Today I agree to think only positive thoughts about myself
- Every day, including today, I get better and better in every way.
- I love my life...and my life and the people in it love me back.
- Today I take another step toward being strong, self-respecting and happy.

Affirm how good your day will be even before your feet hit the floor. Then, repeat your affirmation often – even set an hourly schedule for yourself to stop and affirm your intention. You will be amazed at the difference you will feel in just a few days.

### **B is for BEHAVIOR**

#### **Make up your mind to practice new behaviors**

There is an old adage that promises: “If you always do what you’ve done, you will continue to get what you’ve already got.” That means that if you don’t do something different, nothing’s going to change.

What behaviors get you into trouble or sabotage your best efforts? Do you have the disease to please? And, as a result, are you always saying yes to favors so that people will like you? Or, is saying ‘yes’ without thinking a habit that costs you time and energy?

Here is one way that you can change your self-confining “yes” behaviors: make up your mind that you won’t say ‘yes’ to anything until you have time to think about it. So if someone asks you for a ride, or to volunteer for something, instead of saying “yes” without thinking, your new behavior will be to say, “Let me think about it first and I’ll get back to you tonight, or tomorrow morning.”

Changing this behavior will be difficult at first, and you may surprise and annoy people at first, but you’ll be equally surprised at how differently people begin to treat you and show more respect for your time.

### **C is for COMMUNICATION**

#### **Make up your mind to communicate what you want**

In my book, *Victorious Woman*, I talk about the “Surviving Woman” – the one who is merely surviving her life instead of living it. A Surviving Woman doesn’t include herself on her list of people and things to take care of – everyone else is, but she isn’t. Even worse, she isn’t on anyone else’s list either.

Part of the reason that this woman is just surviving is that she doesn't ask for what she wants. Somehow she thinks that others should know what to give or do for her, and instinctively how to help. Other times she thinks she is asking, but isn't clear, definite or specific, and then gets disappointed when it isn't what she needs or wants. That kind of thinking is sabotaging for a woman. It's like going into Macy's and asking a sales clerk, "Can you find me something you know I'll like?" and then being annoyed by what the clerk brings you.

Just in case you aren't sure what you want, you can start by making a list of ten things that make you happy, or that would alleviate stress. Then, share that all or part of your list with your loved ones. Ask and expect that they will help – just like you help them when they ask. If they say they don't have time, explain to them you don't always have time for them, but you **MAKE THE TIME** because you care for and love them.

Earlier this year a woman told me how she did this with her teenagers. After she made up her mind to return to school, she didn't think she could do it while still taking care of the house and doing all the extra things she liked doing for her spouse and children. She made a list of ten things that her family could do to give her time for school. Following the suggestion above, she chose two tasks that her teenagers could do – the laundry and cleaning bathrooms. She calculated that if she didn't have to do them, she would have would have a couple hours each week for school.

She took those things to her two teens, explained the situation and asked them to do those two chores so that she could do well in school and still have time to drive them to the mall or games and help them when they wanted it. They agreed, and though it took a little time for them to get into the groove, they ended up making those jobs a habit. It wouldn't have happened if she hadn't put those tasks on the list and asked for help.

So let the holidays happen. Do your best with the gifts and the food, but don't place a year's worth of importance on them. Instead, remember the Savvy Woman's ABC's: **ATTITUDE**, beginning with gratitude and intention; **BEHAVIOR** that gives you an internal sense of value and worth; and clear **COMMUNICATION** that helps others to help you.

Commit to practicing them and, one by one, make each a happy new habit. Develop your Savvy Woman skills during the year and by the next Christmas holiday season you'll be celebrating a victory - and you're sure to find a world of difference.

**WISHING YOU HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
AND A HAPPY AND VICTORIOUS  
NEW YEAR!**