

## 2021 Tuesday Tips for Parents

It's Tuesday and time for some simple ideas and tips to help parents live a more conscious parenting experience....

### Today's Tip

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1. Try using a mirroring method of communication with your spouse and your kids. When you mirror you reflect what the other is saying without judgement. "So what I hear you saying is..." or "So you're saying.." then listen. This method includes validation and empathy. Jan 5
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2. Don't leave the room if you and your partner have a disagreement. Arguing in front of the kids is not the issue. It is important for your kids to see that you can resolve the argument in a positive way. Your example teaches your kids that an argument can be resolved peacefully. Jan 12
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3. *"All your mistakes you thought were unforgettable will be insignificant compared to the way you loved them by listening."*

Reference Book: Hands Free Life by Rachel Macy Stafford

Sometimes the simplest thing to do is to shut up and listen. Jan 19

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4. "If I live to be 100 it won't be because I tidied up the house each day before I left. It will be because of the glorious mess I made while I was living life."

Reference Book: Hands Free Life by Rachel Macy Stafford

Let them make a mess, creativity begins in the mess of things. Jan 26

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5. Go inside before you go outside. Make the start of your day reflective and pay attention to how you feel. Schedule time for things you enjoy. We teach our kids by example. Let them see you tune in before you go online, listen to the news, or even take care of household chores.
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6. Positive Direction - Life is not about always being positive. It is about leading your life in the direction you truly want to go. It is not about taking one big leap from where you are now to where you want your life to be. It is about small steps leading in a positive direction.

Reference Book: Your Positive Direction Now - J. Bert Freeman

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7. Contrast - Contrast is the base of how we define life. Bad - Good, Left - Right, Up - Down, Black - White. If all things in this world were white with no other color at all we would not have the definition of white, it would be just what is. Once another color is added then there is that and the other, we have to define them both. So think about it...if there was no (what we call) bad we could not truly define (what we call) good. We need definitions.

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8. Parents worry and stress over the mistakes they make with their kids. What if you looked at your mistakes as lessons for your kids. As long as you find ways to learn from your mistakes or make amends, you are showing your kids a true lesson. They will make mistakes in their life, that is how they learn. What will benefit them the most is your lesson on how they can make mistakes and correct them on their own.

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9. Sometimes we become complacent with the direction we are going. Going off the rails or veering off path can feel like you are losing it. Yet, being sidetracked from your life can be a wake up call to make sure or remind you if you are still going in the direction you wish to go. It can mean you need to make some corrections on your path.

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10. "Today I will not put that which is urgent in front of that which is important."  
Reference Book: Hands Free Life by Rachel Macy Stafford

What is truly important in your life and family. In 20 years from now (or 100 years from now) will it be important that you replied instantaneously to a work email or text. Or that you answered your child's needs with love and caring. Love will prevail over time.

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11. "A person's a person, no matter how small."  
Reference: Dr. Seuss

Your kids are little people and deserve respect. Remember respect is a two way street. In order to get respect, you must first give respect. This may be contradicting what you have been taught or what society emulates but it is the truth. Try it and you may find some real change.

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12. Behavior is a Foreign Language! When kids act out it is a message of a deeper problem. Behavior is not the problem. Do you know that language?

Reference: <http://www.focusedhealthyfamily.com> - Gina and Don Grothoff

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13. Law of Attraction - The bible says it as "What you sow, so shall you reap." What it means is the energy you put out is the energy you will get back. How you handle yourself has an affect on the whole family or house. If you are carrying anger it will affect everyone around you. Managing your emotions can be helpful in keeping a happy house. March 30

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14. Use block time on calendars especially if you work from home. Block off chunks of time for work, family time, chore time and personal time. These blocks of time can be any length of time that everyone agrees upon and reasonably fit with how we work and play. These are blocks of time to take seriously and are not to be deleted. If something unexpected occurs in a time slot, move the allotted time to another day or time, especially if it is your personal time or time with your kids. This not only helps productivity, but is also an example of setting priorities. April 6

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15. When praising a child (or really anyone) praise what they do not who they are. Good Boy can be Bad Boy tomorrow. How they organized their books and stacked the toy blocks into the box as they cleaned their room does not go away even if the room is messy tomorrow, they still did that the day before. April 13

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16. Backwards Day: Shake it up a bit, throw them off. Have dessert first, dinner, breakfast and lunch last. It changes the energy of the house and it can be fun for all. As parents, it is important to let go sometimes and just enjoy life. It won't mess up your routine, just let your kids know this is something you do occasionally. Then, when your child suggests backwards day, try your best to make it happen that day or as soon as possible. April 20

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17. Checklist: Getting tired of telling your kids what they need to do each morning or night? Together, make an actual check list of the things they have to do each day. You can use a laminated board or even a tablet. Have columns of empty check boxes by each thing that they need to check off each day. When they come to you asking what they should do or wanting to go on the computer, ask them, "Did you look at your checklist?" and allow them to initiate going to the checklist. April 27

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18. Give Them Their Wishes in Fantasy: They are demanding a certain cereal for breakfast that you do not have and you don't know what to do or say. "I wish I had a magic wand because I would make the biggest bowl of Crunchies you ever saw and you could eat it all!" Have some fun with it and you will be surprised at how it will work. Giggle and laugh.

Reference Book: "How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk" - Faber/Mazlish

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19. Acknowledge their feelings: As parents we are so quick to correct, answer, solve or push off when asked a question or posed a problem. Try for a change to be quiet and listen. Do not try to solve or correct. Let them talk and see if they can resolve the problem or get to an answer themselves. May 11

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20. Brainstorm: You might be familiar with the idea of brainstorming for a work project, but have you ever used it for your personal life? Brainstorming can be a great tool to use with your kids . When a problem arises, take time with your child to come up with possibilities. Make no judgement on any ideas as you do it, just write them all down no matter how crazy. Then go through them one by one and decide together which ones will work. May 18

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21. Write a Note: In this time of texting and email, the power of the written word is forgotten. A note can do so much. With a positive message it can lift a spirit or improve self confidence. With a request it can get things done without a lot of hassle. With a note it can tell someone that you love them (even if it is just one word) which often is taken for granted. May 25

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22. Ask Questions: Asking questions can help to get your child to talk . This does not mean bombarding them with questions. It is knowing the right timing to ask questions (like not the minute they wake up or the minute they walk in the door or if they are in the middle of a project). It is good to bring the question around from their perspective using phrases like: "If you could change this or solve this how would you do it?" or "Based on your perspective what would you do?" or "I noticed this and was wondering what you thought?" Stay away from "Why" questions because they raise defenses. June 1

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23. Sponge Years: The first years of their life are called the sponge years. During this time, we take in information from our environment and we absorb it in like a sponge, initially with no filters or rules . The human brain does not fully develop until the late 20s. As parents, we play a big role in what our children take in and absorb. And what they experience in the sponge years, will have a big impact on the rest of their life. Remember this and review what words and actions you are laying out for your child's future. June 8

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24. "Anger is a feeling that expresses blame and causes one to focus outside of the self and away from her intimate thoughts and feelings...In pointing a finger at someone or something, she renders herself powerless...To assist your angry child, ask her questions that will help her realize the thoughts that lead to her anger and will connect her to those feelings that are not associated with blame...Useful questions are those that help the child see herself as the cause of her feelings (not what happened)."

"Questions: What do you think it means? How would it be if you had it your way? What's the worst that can happen? How Should it be?" June 15

Excerpts from Book: "Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves." by Naomi Aldort

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25. Mary Sheedy Kurcinka in her book "Raising Your Spirited Child" defines her own child as "a spirited child" and believes many other children fit that definition. She states that a spirited child is one that is more intense, sensitive, perceptive, persistent and energetic.

She states in the book "...the only information I could find that described him (her son) used words like difficult, strong willed, stubborn, mother killer and Denise the Menace." She also states, "When we choose to

see our children as spirited, we give them and ourselves hope. It pulls our focus to their strengths rather than their weaknesses, not as another label, but as a tool for understanding.” June 22

Excerpts from Book: “Raising Your Spirited Child” by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

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26. Labels: Were you labeled as a child? . She is so lazy. He is always grumpy. The list is long; stubborn, whiney, the smart one, demanding, picky. These labels can stick, become self fulfilling and last an entire lifetime. They can also pit us against another, “if he is the smart one then I must be the dumb one.” Can you hear yourself putting out labels on others. What if you could turn those labels to a more positive mode; stubborn could become willing to stick to their beliefs, picky could become selective. How can you turn the labels around?

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27. Countdown or blast off: When it is time to go whether at the park playing with friends or leaving the house, do your kids resist going? Cause a fuss? Does it end up in a melt down? In preparation for leaving a countdown can help. You can use an alarm on your phone or set a timer. It helps to Start with a 20 or 30 minute warning with reminders of things that need to be done before you leave and then either a 15 or 10 min warning and followed by a 5 min warning again reminding them of what needs to happen so you can leave. It can also help to talk about it the night before. Having shared expectations can make for a better experience for all. July 6

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28. If you have a child that is having anxiety or behavior issues consider the idea that food could be playing a big part in that anxiety and behavior. There are some general foods that have a tendency to be allergens; corn, wheat/gluten, dairy, nuts and eggs. There are different ways to test for these. One way is to find a professional that can take your child through testing. Another way is to try the elimination method which entails taking each food out of the diet one at a time and watch the results. Other things to consider are dyes and sugar. July 13

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29. Consequences: According to Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay in their book, *The Parent's Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* “good consequences are described as natural and logical.” As an example: If you don't wear gloves your hands get cold. Finding appropriate consequences, used infrequently, works much better than punishment. July 20

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30. Stuffing down your feelings is like putting a balloon under water, they will just keep rising up. It is better to find avenues to let your feelings out safely. Some basic techniques: breathe, step away, ask for help, use EFT, journal your thoughts and acknowledge what specifically you are feeling. July 27

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31. I like the analogy of emotions as a cup and everyone's cup is a different size. Some have large cups that can hold and deal with a lot of emotional stimulation. There is a certain point where the cup gets full and just a little more stimulation causes the overflow. It is about understanding the size of each person's cup of emotions and knowing how to prevent and deal with the overflow. Aug 3

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32. When a person gets triggered into anxiety and/or anger the tendency is to fight the thought or feeling hoping it will go away. Truth is that when we resist or fight the thought or feeling we actually bring it closer through our focus. The trick is in acceptance of the thought or feeling. In accepting the thought or feeling we can then begin the process of changing it. In acceptance we can recognize it and begin to dig into what is behind it. Usually that is some type of fear. Acceptance begins our journey to change.

Reference: Arm Length Awareness by Focused Healthy Family

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33. Sleep: Insomnia can disrupt both physical and emotional well being. Here are some tips for improved sleeping from Dr. Weils:

- Eliminate caffeine from your diet, especially in the form of soft drinks and coffee, as well as in over-the-counter drugs (check the labels).
- Practice daily breathing exercises, and the relaxing breath when falling asleep.
- Take a warm bath before bedtime.
- Get at least 45 minutes of aerobic activity every day.

Our own experience found cutting back on electronics an hour before bed, make the room dark and setting routine wake up and go to bed times help set the internal sleep clock. Aug 17

Reference Website: <https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/sleep-issues/natural-sleep-aids-tips/>

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34. Mary Sheedy Kurcinka in her book "Raising Your Spirited Child" talks about helping our child get dressed in the morning and how distractions can be detrimental to that getting done. She mentions distractions as open shades or blinds on windows, an open room door that allows for an easy exit, toys that call for play.

Since the book was published in 1991, It is important to add computers, and smartphones and tablets . A distraction free environment can be the best place for speeding up and improving productivity in any activity. Aug 24

Excerpts from Book: "Raising Your Spirited Child" by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

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35. There is no one right way to parent even though you will find a lot who will tell you otherwise. There was no manual that came out with the umbilical cord. Parents many times are going based on how they were parented or by what others or books tell them or just flying by the seat of their pants. None of that (including the tips here) has to be your path as a parent if it doesn't feel right to you and doesn't follow your heart.

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36. “...the most important factors in the life of their children are not the school, the television set, the playmates or the neighborhood, but what the parents cherish, what they hate and what they fear.” Sept 7

Reference Quote: Thomas Hora, Existential Metapsychiatry

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37. Humor can play a big role in communicating and interacting with your children. Parents sometimes don't want to show a lighter side to themselves in fear that their children will see it as a weakness or that you have to be strong and serious to teach your children. In reality humor can show how a parent is human and flexible to laugh with others and at their own faults. It can also relieve anxiety and break the ice. Here is a joke to get you started:

Why do elephants paint their toes red?  
I don't know. Why?  
So they can hide in cherry trees!  
I never saw an elephant in a cherry tree.  
See, it works!  
Sept 14

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38. “The best thing to read when raising a child is the child. Maybe it's even more important to read ourselves...The problem with most problem-solving books is they start out with the idea that the child has a problem.” Sep 21

Reference Book: Whole “Child/Whole Parent” by Polly Berrian Berends

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39. Have you ever gotten a child a toy or gift and found the child liked playing with the box instead of the gift. The idea here is that it is not about the toy but the fun and joy they get from play. In the same sense a child gets more joy out of your time spent with them versus what you give them as a gift. Your time spent with your child (of any age) is worth more than gold. Sep 28

40. Mary Sheedy Kurcinka in her book “Raising Your Spirited Child” talks about children who have a tendency to become upset or nervous about unfamiliar situations or social situations. She makes the following suggestions:

- Encourage your child. Don't Push
- Warn your child about new things that will be happening. Talk about what to expect.
- Arrive early or visit a new place ahead of time, before your child is expected to participate.
- Allow your child to observe.
- Provide lots of opportunities to practice.
- Remind your child of similar situations that she rejected at first but enjoys now.
- Allow yourself to think before you respond to your child's questions (and reactions).

Excerpts from Book: “Raising Your Spirited Child” by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka  
OCT 5

41. **Holidays: Plan Events Early and Wisely:** Nowadays with the advent of the internet you have so many sites that give you the events going on around your town. The holidays are no exceptions, the internet is a wonderful place to find events around the holidays: decorated houses to see, parties to attend, holiday shows, Santa Claus visits and so much more. So it is easy and wise to plan early to see some of the best events. It is recommended to get your kids involved in these plans. Do what your kids want to do and then plan something without them for you and your significant other on a separate occasion. Just don't overdo it by trying to attend an event every night or by filling all of your weekends. Burnout, exhaustion, stress and anxiety can result from trying to do too much. Pick the things that you and your children really want to do and be sure to allow down time. Oct 12

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42. **Holidays: Know Your Limitation:** You want to do it all and have the perfect Christmas so therefore you pile on the expectations with a long to-do list. You have to stand in line on Black Friday to get the best deal on all the "must have" gifts. You want to make the biggest and most elaborate Christmas dinner. You want to decorate the house, have the best neighborhood light display and attend all of the holiday gatherings. Yet, you have all of your regular responsibilities that already take all of your time such as your job, housework, helping your kids with homework and getting them to their activities. So how do you do it all? You need to understand your limitations, learn to say no, and prioritize based on what really matters to your family. Oct 19

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43. **Holidays: Get Your Kids Involved:** What I find so touching are parents who involve their kids in the holidays. You just want to get it done: the cooking, the wrapping, the planning, the shopping. You want it done perfectly, whether it be the prettiest packages or picture perfect pies. If you involve your kids in the process, it allows their energy to be channeled in a constructive way and we can learn from our children how to appreciate the simple things and enjoy the process of preparing for the holidays.

In my family we wrap most of our gifts in brown paper bags and then decorate the package with stickers, drawings and messages of holiday cheer. You can also decorate the paper first including painted hand prints and then use it to wrap the gifts. By letting the children wrap the gifts, you engage them in the process and free up some of your time. They might not look perfect, but those receiving the gifts will know they were wrapped with love. You can also wrap the gifts together creating memories and even a holiday tradition that will remain with them longer than the gifts you give them. Oct 26

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44. **Holidays: Tap:** EFT tapping is an excellent tool to eliminate the stress, anxiety and depression that can happen during the holiday. EFT tapping is the process of self tapping on the meridians or acupressure points to improve your physical, emotional and spiritual functioning. EFT is about aligning your energy for your best functioning and health. That is why it is said "What you sow, so shall you reap!" This can also be said as "the energy you put out is the energy you get back". Giving out good energy gets back good energy. Having a positive and uplifting energy at Christmas is especially important because there is so much that takes our energy that we need all we can get. What energy do you want for the holiday?

In order to help you with your energy, I have included with this a "How To Tap instructions" and a Holiday tapping script. Try this tapping for the holidays to relax and enjoy the holidays. To find out more about EFT tapping and what it can do for you go to: [www.focusedhealthyfamily.com](http://www.focusedhealthyfamily.com) Nov 2

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45. **Holidays: Don't Rush Your Kids:** One big lesson my wife taught me about my kids is not to rush them. That is not easy for me because of my type A personality. I often want to just get moving and get it done. When you are visiting friends, family or fun places, it is helpful to allow them enough time and to know how much time is enjoyable for them. Many kids find a 15 or 30 minute warning prior to leaving useful as well as further reminders of how much time is left, i.e. 10 minutes, 2 minutes. Would you like to be pulled from a meeting or from a project you are working on with no notice or time to prepare? Children don't like to be yanked out of a situation and told, "it's time to go now", especially when they are having fun. Some children need time to warm up and might not be able to enjoy themselves with people they do not know or unfamiliar family members or a new activity until they have had adjustment time. And others may only be able to handle a short visit. Pay attention to your children and know what they need for all the holiday gatherings and events. Nov 9

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46. **Holidays: Respect Your Kid's Feelings:** It is so easy to say to a child "not now, can't you see I am busy" or "I have got to get this done in order to have a good Christmas" or just the simple "I don't have time now". Even worse in my book is when they come to you with an idea or a specific gift they want or a problem and your reply shuts them down. "We can't afford that", "that is not true" or "that is just stupid". Those messages can damage a child's self esteem and undermine their initiative and independence. Your children are humans too and deserve some respect. Listening to them and their feelings can make a world of difference. One example my wife and I use for Christmas wishes, especially ones you know you cannot afford is to respond to their wish by simply saying "Oh, that is a wonderful idea, why don't you make a list of things you would like". Many times the act of creating the wish list satisfies their wanting and sometimes they forget or move on to something else by the time the holidays come. Nov 16

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47. **Holidays: Eat Right:** Grandma's famous pumpkin pie, those wonderful gingerbread cookies, colorful candy canes and all the delicious and exotic treats you have during the holidays can be some of the biggest disruptors of the holidays. Sugar, gluten, hydrogenated oils, dyes and all the chemicals in food can turn an adult or child into a wild beast. You want to give your kids the joys of the taste, smells and feelings of the holidays but to what cost. It is important for you to watch labels, make your own treats and plan ahead. Feeding your kids healthy, nutritious food before going to grandmas or that holiday party will minimize eating the unhealthy, processed foods. Cutting back on sugar or eating sugary items earlier in the day can help in the evening when it is time for sleep. Nov 23

After a large holiday meal, take time to do an activity such as walking or playing outside. Do this along with your kids to encourage the activity and maintain your health. It might not be easy to do but the results can last a lifetime.

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48. **Holidays: Don't Overdue Travel:** "We have to visit both sets of grandparents and our great Aunt, and..." What would the Holidays be without those trips? Pack up the car once more, cook one more pie and don't forget the gifts. Did you remember the airline tickets? Should you leave two hours early for the flight? What about the memories they create? Visits with family and friends do create good memories. They can also create horrible memories of exhausted parents, stressed out kids and family arguments. Would it not be better to stretch out the holiday travels over several months and not try to make all of those trips within a month or a week? Christmas and the holidays do not have to be about a particular day. My own extended family now celebrates "Thanksmas" between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Holidays are a time to enjoy family, friendship and love no matter when it happens. And keep in mind that winter travel can be delayed, interrupted and cancelled due to weather conditions. Create your own personal holiday traditions. Nov 30

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49. **Holidays: Remember:** It is easy to get lost in the commercial holiday expectations and pressures. You want to do it all and have the perfect holiday. In doing all of this, you often forget the real meaning of the holidays. No matter your religious beliefs, it comes down to love and spending time with the people you love. If you put love at the top of your list, as well as foremost in your mind and remember to keep love a priority throughout the whole season, I believe your holidays will be the best.

One particular Christmas when I was a small child, my family was enjoying the holidays and yet, if we would have known what was coming would we have changed how we did our holidays? It wasn't that we weren't loving and thoughtful of each other but we were wrapped in the gifts and hype of the season. That holiday was the last holiday we would spend with my sister for she passed away from a heart condition shortly after the holidays. So an important lesson is to remember what the holidays are truly about and be in that place always. Dec 7

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50. **Holidays: Laugh and Breathe:** It is easy to forget with the rush, pressure and excitement of the holidays that you need to breathe and laugh to really enjoy it all. Taking big deep breaths throughout your whole day and especially when you are panicked or stressed is extremely important. Teaching your kids to properly breathe can help them to manage their emotions too. Good, deep breaths can increase blood flow, lower stress and rejuvenate cells in the body. Belly breathing can also help during panic attacks to take pressure off of the chest and relieve the panic. I like to use raspberry breathing to help get kids to breathe and giggle at the same time.

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51. **Holidays: Spend time not money:** The best gift you can give to your kids and anyone is the gift of yourself: your time, energy and attention. Memories made together will be remembered and cherished more than an iPhone, video game, or any toy.

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52. **Holidays: Create your own New Year Traditions:** Our family has participated in a Burning Bowl and Letters to God (or the universe) ceremony each New Year's Eve at our local Unity Church. The ceremony involved writing down something(s) that you wanted to release from the year, like negative or self-limiting beliefs. We then paraded outside to a fire pit where we released our papers into the fire. The second part of the ceremony involved writing a letter to God, or your future self. You write the letter as if it is now the end of the next year and write about all the good that has happened over the year, all the things you have manifested which can be both physical like a new home as well as things like feeling healthier, exercising regularly, or spending more time with your family doing things you all enjoy. Unity would hold onto our letters sealed in an envelope that we self-addressed. They would then mail it to us in late October or early November. The first time we participated in this ceremony, our oldest child was about 4 years old and we wrote down his items for him. When our younger children were small, their letter might be a picture or just scribbles. It has always been exciting to receive the letters in the mail later that year and then read them together.