



MY BIG FAT

ADHD

HOLIDAY

THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF HOLLY JOLLY

Stacey Turis

There's something about the holiday season and me that just doesn't jive well together. I write "something" like it's a mystery as to what it is that bothers me, but it's not. It's ALL overwhelming, overstimulating, and what I would call the complete opposite of holly jolly. I'm just trying to make sure my kids have shoes on when they get to school, and suddenly I'm expected to add a gazillion things to my to-do list, that frankly I never even look at. "Bah, Humbug!" I say. I've used different ways to cope over the years, with none of them particularly beneficial to my mental health. My most popular go-to coping skill is to worry about how bad the less fortunate must feel during the holidays. That gets me into a nice deep depression that carries me through to January; too sad, numb, and detached to lose my mind from an overdose of jingling bells.

Last year my mom's mom, whom I lovingly call Mami, died a few days before Christmas. I was already at ground zero in Crazyville so I took the news in a very calm, very numb way. My mom flew out to tend to the details and was scheduled to fly back home on Christmas day so we could celebrate. I did what any sane daughter would do and started worrying about who was going to cook the holiday dinner, with my mom at 35,000 feet when she should be on the ground baking the best-ever broccoli casserole I've eaten annually for the last thirty-nine years. That's when I got the really bad idea to do all of the cooking myself.

When I proposed this idea, some friends felt really sorry for us and got our family a holiday dinner to pick up from the local market as a condolence gift. My stepdad was especially grateful

because he knew how close he came to tasting his first ever Tofurkey. Thankful that the "less than fun" stuff to cook would be taken care of, I decide to attack the more "creative" dishes my gourmet-chef-of-a-mom had added to the holiday menu over the years.

I made at least fourteen trips to the grocery store in those couple of days, because getting everything at once would mean I had to pre-plan, and we all know that wasn't happening. During one of the trips, I had the ingredients listed for a four-cheese macaroni dish and a port wine cranberry sauce. I should have noticed that the ingredients took over the front and back side of the paper. I should have noticed that my cart was quite full for two dishes. I should have noticed the total at the register before I skipped out of Whole Foods on my merry little way.

None of the above crossed my mind until my husband dug the receipt out of my purse. What came out of his mouth next surely put him straight to the naughty list. After doing some quick math, he determined that the ingredients for the cranberry sauce cost a whopping \$40 and the "foofoo" mac and cheese ingredients came to an embarrassing \$67. I felt like an idiot for not paying attention, but vowed to wow him with my kitchen prowess.

Unfortunately, the only one that ended up being wowed was my dog Stormi. After two days of cooking and who-knows-how-much spent at the market, as I was starting to lay the different dishes out to take over to my mom's house, Stormi decided she too wanted to be in on the mac and cheese action. It was already half-gone before I found her with the four gourmet cheeses spread about her snout. Too exhausted to do anything but scoot





her out of the way, I stuck my finger in and scooped some macaroni in my mouth. Blech. Too cheesy.

The moral of the story? Holidays are like the four-cheese macaroni dish. You can glam it up however you want, but at the end of the day the simple, original ingredients are what make it truly special.

UNINVITED HOLIDAY GUESTS

A CHADD member

Christmas 2002 will forever be remembered for our uninvited guests. About five days before Christmas, my eighteen-year-old daughter complained that her head was “itching really bad.” When I checked her hair I discovered she had head lice, most likely from using the spare hat that her grocery store employer kept on hand for when deli workers like Celia left their hats at home.

Anyway, being a veteran of two past infestations, we did the tried and true process of that era. I bought special shampoo (*ka-ching*), went to the laundromat and washed every sheet, blanket, comforter, pillow sham, winter coat, hat, scarf, and ALL of the clothes that my two teens threw on their bedroom floor (*ka-ching, ka-ching*). Although I was exhausted, I felt I had done everything possible to be rid of the itchy pests. Celia also used a special veterinary product on her ferret, Sid Vicious. His name was not just a tribute to the late musician, trust me.

I moved on to the chores and duties that accompany the final countdown for Christmas in a family of four. Christmas Eve arrived and off we went to 5:30 evening Mass. To get a seat, we arrived at 4:30. This left a lot of time for fidgeting in the pews. I looked over at my sixteen-year old son Mike and noticed a little black speck on his light grey jacket. The speck was moving!

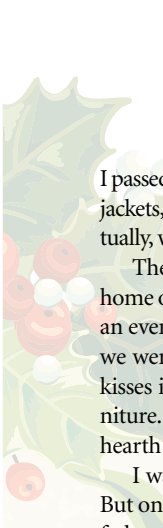
He figured out exactly what I saw and stage whispered, “Get it off me.” I shook my head “no.” He said, “It’s freaking me out.” So I had no choice but to pick it up and squish it. I felt like a gorilla in the mist.

The Mass was beautiful but I really couldn’t think of anything but the large workload ahead of me. And we would not get home until almost 7 PM.

Well, we made the best of it. We enjoyed a hastily arranged dinner in front of the fire and drank some eggnog. Then I announced the backup plan for when lice shampoo doesn’t work. It seems the little devils are becoming unaffected by traditional lice-killing products. So many doctors recommend coating your hair in mayonnaise or margarine. The grease smothers the live bugs and damages the unhatched eggs.

This plan was met with much resistance. Three out of four family members resigned themselves to having their hair slathered with mayo and wrapped in plastic grocery bags for a few hours. Celia has always played the role of dissenter in our family, and she did not take a night off for the holiday. She put ferret medicine on her hair and went out with her friends.

The three of us kept our heads in plastic bags and ignored our sudden craving for potato salad. My husband and son watched a holiday movie.



I passed the time by stripping beds and laundering the evening's sheets and jackets, knowing I would still have to re-clean the other items later. Eventually, we washed our hair with dishwashing detergent and went to bed.

The next morning we attended our traditional family brunch at the home of my sister-in-law, who is a hairdresser. Since pestilence would be an even bigger problem for her and her business than for most people, we were very vigilant. And rather odd. We greeted everyone with air kisses instead of warm hugs. We refused to sit on the upholstered furniture. Ferret-medicine Celia opened her gifts while sitting on the stone hearth like Cinderella.

I was determined not to do ANY laundry on the birthday of Jesus. But on December 26th, I ran the washer and dryer at my house and my father-in-law's house at full throttle! And just to be on the safe side, I purchased some all-natural lice-killing shampoo and furniture spray. And you know how pricey all-natural products are (*triple ka-ching*).

As December 26th came to a close, I felt secure in my knowledge that we had the cleanest hair, coats, furniture, bedding, and hair brushes in the county. My security lasted until 7 PM... when Celia came home from work and announced that she had left her deli hat in her friend's car that morning... so she wore "the spare."

WELCOME TO OUR HOUSE

(A PRE-INTERNET EVENT)

A CHADD member

The holidays were imminent and it was time for a party. In our exuberance, we invited about two hundred people, just so in our insecurity we would have someone show up.

Loving the décor of the season, we designed our invitations, copied them on the copier, available only in black and white. Out came the water colors and each was carefully colored in the most definitive creative fashion. Menu was selected, hot and cold hors d'ouvres, pine boughs throughout, many ribboned accents, spicy punch in the bowl.

The day arrived, everyone in their finery, Dad in his new sport coat (label still on the sleeve), children all prompted as to their roles and warned intensely to behave (a lot of good that does). Party time was designed to be from 6-9 PM.

By 6:30, no one had arrived. The kids (four of them) went out to play. In the south the weather was mild that day, just after a nice rain. By 7 PM, still no guests, but two soaking wet tykes came in the pristine front door splashing mud along their way. Hastily sent to the second-floor shower. Then the dog came in the back and completed the cycle of mud throughout. Thankfully, still no guests. Mop in hand at 8 PM, I'm slinging up the mess till I'm distracted by the timer that has burnt a batch in the oven. As I hurried to the sink to eliminate the cinders, I slipped into the bucket. Frustrated beyond belief... you know the rest. The doorbell rings... our first guest has arrived. She was a neighbor, well used to our chaos. Rolled up her sleeve and pitched in. By 9:15 we had everything sort-of under control.

With a warm glass of spiked cider we sat limp at the kitchen table. The doorbell continued to ring, and neighbors filed in. Everyone thought it amusing that we would have a party from 9 at night until 6 in the morning. Several brought pajamas for a sleepover, just like the kids have, so we salvaged our time together.

We redesigned the hors d'oeuvres to all-night snacks and found eggs, etc., for breakfast. Our first guest departed at 4 AM.

Our survival was having neighbors who understood. Our escape was that the invitations, sent to the university where my husband was a professor, never got delivered—they were still on the seat of his car. The laugh of the age was the impulsivity of putting together the invitation without proofreading, and the love was the extensive care and attention shared with friends.

When chaos reigns, reach out and catch the raindrops! 🍂