

full tilt living newsletter

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Holiday month is here again! We've got parties stacked on top of parties. Gifts to give, places to go. It's an exuberant time of year. We run into excess without even trying. And it can easily begin to feel like the exuberance is turning into a long, exhausting string of obligations. If your holiday spirit is sagging and you'd dearly love to get it back, I have a suggestion. Move that exuberance out of the traditions and into some slightly wacky but still very spirited connecting and giving.

Use Mama Maureen's Magical Holiday Cheer recipe:

Take two parts undiluted good will, one part something that would be a nice thing to do that would be totally different than what you or anyone else would expect you to do, heat to just under the enthusiasm boiling point. Stir until well blended and serve. Here's what the finished product might look like:

- Give yourself the challenge of finding the person at the party whom you'd be most likely *not* to connect with and spend time with them until you find something you can

actually share with them. Okay, so it could take all night. Where else do you have to go? And isn't this more intriguing than talking about the same stuff with the folks you already know?

- If you live in one of those parts of the country where you have to scrape the ice off the windshield before you can get home, scrape the windows of the guy parked next to you.
- Buy coffee for your least favorite office mate.
- Make cookies for the person in your crowd best known for making holiday cookies for everyone else. I bet you'll find they rarely get treated back.
- Get to work fifteen minutes early and take the time to say good morning to at least three people before the day starts.
- Shave a few dollars off what you are planning to spend on the gifts you're giving to people who could live with a little less. Then donate it to a cause.
- Let someone else choose the station on the radio.
- Let one person cut in front of you. It could be

in the car, at the store, on the subway.

- When you're at that party, go back to the kitchen and help with the dishes. Especially if you would be considered the least likely candidate for kitchen duty.
- Call someone you rarely talk to and wish them a happy holiday.
- Take treats to your local animal shelter. Meet and greet. Pass out treats to the people: dog people, cat people, people people.

These are for starters. Make your own if you like. Spread that spirit in new directions! Your holidays will get a lift. Guaranteed or your money back.