

COMMUNITY COMMENT
December 6, 2016

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I'm going to talk about the holidays—but before I do, I want to give the same disclaimer I do every year at this time. I like to say “Happy Holidays.” I assure you it is not a war on Christmas, it just happens to be my phrase of choice. And, in return, I ask you not to have a war on “Happy Holidays.”

I saw a chart last week about what to say during the holiday season, and it said something like—if someone wishes you Merry Christmas and you celebrate Christmas, say “Thank you, you too.” If you do not celebrate Christmas and someone says “Merry Christmas,” reply “Thank you, you too.” If someone wishes you Happy Hanukkah, and you celebrate Hanukkah, say “Thank you, you too.” If you don't celebrate Hanukkah, say “Thank you, you too.” And so on. I thought that was kinda wonderful.

There are traditions that have to be navigated during the holidays that we didn't used to think twice about before.

Who do we send cards to, do we even send cards? Is there any new photo or story that hasn't already been shared through social media that we need to send in a holiday card? And if someone sends one to you, do you need to send one back? I love Christmas cards that are photos of the family, dogs, kids, friends. Otherwise, I have to say, a card simply signed by the person doesn't do it for me. I appreciate the thought, but I want a note with it. I used to be so good about sending Christmas and New Years cards, but somewhere in the last decade, I stopped.

What about decorating? The greatest invention for outdoor decorations is that projector—it throws colored light onto your house. Someone

down the block is doing that and it looks good. Too late for me. If I don't get decorations up the weekend after Thanksgiving, they don't get up. And yet, each year I buy new decorations to add to my collection. Next year!

It's become very difficult to be present and connected during the holidays. We have gifts to buy, parties to attend—or throw—and relatives that need our attention. Sometimes we get frustrated when the kids are on the phone instead of helping get ready for Christmas.

Last week one of the networks did a story on a study that took smart phones away from teenagers for a week to see what happened. By the end of the week, many of the teens were fine without their phone. Once they learned how to fill the void left by not having a phone and dealing with the boredom, they actually appreciated the freedom.

The problem? While their phones had been taken away, their parents' phones had not. It was their parents on the phone at dinner, it was the parents not connecting because of their phones.

We can make the holidays special this year. Put the phone down, turn the tv off, and give the present of being present. You don't even need to find a ribbon for it!

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.