

Holiday Unholiness? – Top 5 Colorado Humbug-to-Happiness Tips from The Jones
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Oxford Dictionary: Holiday: Old English - *haligdoeg*, “holy day”.

Holy? Right. We may earnestly hope or wish for such, but ah-hem: How about some good old holiday holy honesty *first?*

Let's:

Humbug. December 1: The close of this year's clock just tocked its almighty ticking: The pressure. The jingles. The ads. The annual tunes just began blaring their jolly shrills while echoing out of the mall speakers a week before Black Friday—which may don the *unholy award* for titles responsible for ringing in an alleged *holy* season—hiccupping like the confused needle on scratchy old vinyl, minus the romance. As if scored straight into your brain without its consent, the generic holiday verses blare, buzz and tease like flies that each cunningly escape your devout attempted swatting, swirling daftly around instead back up into their automatic aerial holding patterns up there...repeating *Here Comes Santa Claus* bell-clanging choruses and such. There is no end to this random music poisoning. Your mental attic has now become the full-swing flipping Fly Festival for their noisy December, rent-free. No voting allowed.

Just guessing, but a literal million of us may by now unanimously nod that the competitive vendetta of *keeping up with the Jones* this season grew straight into obsolete fetish an attention deficit decade or three ago. But has it? Who are *The Jones* anymore? Do we even know them? Too much has happened lately. *The Login Gen* has soaked each of us in time-sucking password commands for all things that beep or alight, save our own brains for now. 2014 history books have fattened with glum. We're all just trying... *to get by*. So, who has the time to even ponder *The Jones* family now, let alone the obnoxious flashing state of their candy-cane flanked *driveway?* Yes, alright, we know that the social gravity of the almighty microwave coerced the 1970s plump red Bing cherries into peeling right off the housewife's apron with a thud, evaporating into the thinnest air of early morning fluorescent politically correct co-ed cubicles. Just around the time that Gloria pronounced that fish don't really need bicycles, the overly ripened aprons swiftly saluted after the cherries fell, victoriously slipping off of the housebound estrogen fishies, dead scales and all. A co-ed world remains. Forgetting hormones, who now male, female, or snail has ample time to staple-gun lights all over the roof with that plastered rage-concealed Chevy Chase holiday smile?

The voice upstairs keeps bantering. Yes, *The Voice* that talks *to thyself*—the one that allows the mall's musical flies to incessantly encircle the mental airport hanger upstairs, *The Voice* that *just* retorted in your mind, “Voice? What voice?... Rubbish, my mind doesn't talk to *itself*... Nooo, I don't hear a voice, dear...”

Ding! That's the one.

It yammers on, begging judgmental whispers about what we have not yet done for the house, the kids, and our dusty dreams of ago:

“The Christmas tree isn't up yet. The fake one with green bushy limbs that saw its golden day ago was smashed up from the big divorce move and is probably hiding like Harrison Ford's prized chalice under a couple of hulking book boxes that the sociopathic movers dumped on it, while ignoring my carefully intentioned Sharpie labeled “fragile”! This tree-saving word is now not facing outward in order so that I can locate it pronto this weekend, before the second snow barfs its nonchalance all over the driveway.”

And yes, it is an urgent buried box. I'd like to have the dang thing up and plugged in *before* beholding the nostalgic neighborhood pseudo-confused-Jones' freshly cut trees that will be twinkling through their foyer windows, pointy star and all, for procrastinating neighbors such as myself to begin sighing over.

Someone . . . H e l p!!!?

Swallow, inhale. OK: *The Voice* just sauntered in again, rationalizing, embellishing to justify for a beat while

scratching your head: Did the Jones have ample time to snuggle up and tuck in with the kiddos to re-watch Chevy's apropos holiday rage in the original *Christmas Vacation* after having stuffed someone else's charity-baked buffet turkey into *their* kids? The undying neighborhood vendetta and my nostalgic dreams of youth that didn't come true, they keep knocking on my wreathless door. This morphed neuroses of somehow *beating each other in a yard-light race to happiness* via prickly trees and pointy stars now looks like one big slapped displacement that has literally been projected itself all over my neighborhood by way of loud lights, fake snowmen with fake coal as their noses, and fake trees from a basement box. Truly? Is this *it*? Jones or Smith, these days slightly after the crack of dawn, a much deserved estrogen yawn, and exactly one cup of generic-brand coffee poisoned by chlorinated tap water at such cherry-less, apron-less mod-woman's early morning obnoxious cancer-making fluorescent petri-dish-of-a-desk, the ads smothering the radio waves don't help, but the neighborhood vendetta itch still begs.

Shall we stuff away the dreamy family tradition we occupied as wee ones?

"Oh, Yes! The very weekend of Thanksgiving, I will have my own family. We will skip into some forest somewhere giggling after carefree warm eggnog. We will find and cut down a Christmas tree...together! Yippee!"

Oh, humbug. Reality now pales in comparison, so I'm just gonna say it: The first few of weeks of December have become an unending ~~dirt-pile-straight-under-the-rug~~ sport with the ex-wife, deciding tug-of-war style (between hang-ups) exactly *which* 24 hour periods during Christmas weekend that the kids will be shuffled like some card game in Vegas between house stays post-vitriolic acid smothered phone calls betwixt their parents since our recent split. The question of which grandparents are still married (or alive) that either of us must agree to accommodate for three whole days and long nights in one of the kids' twin beds at either house after their guilt-laden Christopher Columbus haul from their Floridian or Californian balmy beach house—that's still on the front burner--*boiling*, as it were.

Meanwhile, back at thy own humble homestead when in a rush beyond rushes yesterday morn, you staple-gunned some cheap orange and white tacky holiday light strings from the grocery store run's last minute *holiday aisle for dummies* section to the side of the house. You were just pitching your initial shy attempt at participation in the neighborhood Jones' unspoken rage of aesthetic Yards-of-Lights game—when low and behold you learned that the soot-singed smoldering smears on the peach paint post-plugging the dang thing in can not be wiped away with the Dollar General bleach water you keep in the specially designated Sharpie-marked bottle in tandem with the trusty grime-rag that you still try to keep for such special smoldering occasions as this. Heck, you're just feeling grateful that your finger and thumb are still available. Painting over the insipid blackness now must wait until the spring bucketlist kicks off when the plant by the door yearns to return from the dead, as you will. Then? That Voice again. It prods as usual, but this time, it seductively sashays around up there like Cruella DeVile's less-nice sister masquerading as Marilyn Monroe: *"Do people send snail-mail holiday cards anymore? Did my addresses sync with Gmail from my phone? Should I print labels and hard mail people? Is there an app for that?"*

The Question: *Who* exactly is it that we are driven like some ferocious invisible engine to "keep up with" anymore? Do we even *know* The Jones? Do they exist? And if we did know them, is the relentless frumpy yard and tree racing honestly necessary? We seem to do well just to keep up with *ourselves* while firing up neighborhoods via singeing our houses ablaze and hunting basement boxes for fake green limbs as a result of the deficit sustained from our insatiable childhood yearnings. Is this how we decide that preparing for the "holidays" should *be for us*? You'd rather swallow forks than to bear another 24-hour period of such madness. Agreed.

The Other Question: What is *holy* about *living* during the holidays? Dictionaries are handy: Oxford Dictionary: Holy: Old English - *halig* aka "whole, sacred, morally and spiritually excellent!" Oxford Dictionary: Living: Old English - *libban, lifian*, "perennially flowing". How do we now have and enjoy a "perennially flowing, sacred, whole, morally and spiritually excellent holiday", *Ms. Jones?! Do tell!*

Top 5 Colorado Humbug-to-Happiness Tips from The Jones to The Smiths:

1. Help someone who doesn't have a house *for* a tree; they have a body with an empty stomach: Denver Rescue Mission 1130 Park Avenue West, Denver. Got cans? Left over soup from last night? Hit the soup kitchen. Hope begins here with \$1.92 if you feel it. Volunteer or just show up.

Web: <https://www.denverrescuemission.org> +1(303) 294-0157.

2. Sit with your eyes closed for 5 whole minutes tomorrow morning allowing the sun to gently laser its warm beams directly into your forehead, then scoot down to the Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple, no matter your religion or lack thereof; perhaps ask if they need anything over the holiday season after taking a mental walk throughout. Scoop: www.tsdbt.org +1(303) 295-1844.

3. Take a stroll with your newest date or the kiddos through Denver's one and only holiday *Zoo Lights*. Bring a touch of cheer via a hello to the fuzzy pals behind bars. Happening now! Available every single night at the Denver Zoo: 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. through January 4th! Web: <http://www.denverzoo.org/events/zoo-lights-2014> +1 (720) 337-1400

4. Oh, Denverites, Denveradians, Denverinos? Question: What do Cheesman, Washington, Civic Center, Confluence, Sloan's Lake, Commons, Skyline, Centennial Flower Gardens, & Bear Creek have in common? Answer: A grassy invitation for your flower-filled stress-free holiday season enjoyment. Toss together an easy fun picnic and walk—no wheels, yes, shoes—with someone you love or someone from #1 to one of Denver's top fave lush parks. The mile high city boasts more than 4,000 acres of traditional parks and parkways, which include 2,500 urban natural acres, over 300 acres of parks designated rivers and trails, and an additional 14,000 acres of spectacular mountain parks. Downtown Denver is blanketed in such lush sophistication, so cop-a-squat on its kind green floors, wiggle your toes around in the wetness, and exhale in deepest gratitude that you live here. [*Psst! -Picnic Tip*: Local King Sooper has family deals at the deli for a fun picnic basket: fried chicken, mashed, and pick a side.] No excuses. Cool? Cool. Web: <http://www.denver.org/things-to-do/sports-recreation/denver-parks/> +1(720) 913-1311

5. ColoradoWood – Galactic Mental Matrices: Hollywood's piping hot new blockbuster, *Interstellar*, starring Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway, has ricocheted and echoed our awesome state's NORAD literally all over the galaxy and into realms unknown this season. Learn how cool you in fact *are*, Colorado. Endeavor out of the humbug rigamaroo for a *half-day* to understand with thy own feet for thyself exactly what your Colorado offers to our world by booking a tour of NORAD. If time isn't kind enough to incorporate NASA & NORAD brilliance into the thick Dayrunner, then perhaps just opt to revisit "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead" with a trusty tub of ice cream and the remote. Dopamine & Netflix should be proven fact by now in the obliteration of holiday humbugs, if only for a single December night. NORAD Tours: <http://www.visitcos.com/cheyenne-mountain-and-norad> or help them with The NORAD Santa Tracker: <http://www.noradsanta.org/>.

No time? Google "Haagen-Dazs" or pop on by next door to share some with us. We'd love to show you our tree! Yes . . .

Love,

The Jones