

# Recognize the choice

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What are the most frequently used words in your house? Choice is one of ours. I guess it's because I've always been drawn to that quote that says, "Life is 10% what happens to you, and 90% how you react to it." We always, always, always have a choice. It's our responsibility to recognize the choices we have and the choices we're making.

The example that immediately comes to mind for me is the holidays. When a certain relative complains about all the work she has to do to prepare for the Easter celebration, I remind her she doesn't have to do all of that. There's not even a rule that she hosts the celebration. Her response? "But I love doing it!" Okay, then stop complaining.

I hear "have to" so often around Christmas. "I have to buy gifts for all these people!" "I have to bake cookies!" "I have to get my Christmas cards out."

Guess what! You don't have to do any of those things. I've met people who long ago opted out of giving and receiving gifts at the holiday. There are plenty of people (including yours truly) who don't bake cookies at the holidays. And I missed sending out Christmas cards a few years ago and yet somehow the earth kept spinning.

When you stop and realize you have a choice, everything changes. If you love buying gifts, then say, "I get to go Christmas shopping today!" If baking cookies is one of your favorite holiday traditions, schedule time for it so you can say "I'm looking forward to baking cookies this weekend." If you enjoy sending Christmas cards, then by all means, shop for them, address them, and send them. But do it because you want to, not because you have to. Because you don't.

Even if people have to come to expect something from you, you always have a choice. So either embrace the choice you've made or choose differently.