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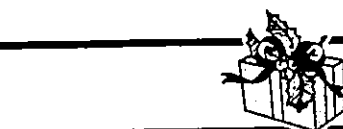
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Here's to your holiday health

By Orlando Ramirez
special writer

ALIGHT snow is falling as you and your family drive up to the house. Through the fog-shrouded windows the Christmas tree glows brightly.

As you approach the holly-bedecked door, the aroma of baked turkey and the happy voices of your relatives rise in a symphony of pleasure and greetings.

That's not your scenario? No, you've got a new baby, that balloon payment due Dec. 15 and your sister is mad because you spent Thanksgiving with your husband's family.

Don't feel alone. No holidays create as much stress as Christmas or Hanukkah. Somewhere between our childhood (some would say childish) expectations and the commercial assault that seems to begin in August,

the joy is squeezed out of the holidays, leaving us feeling like a pouch of freeze-dried astronaut food.

What to do? Well, you can let the holiday blues drive you into a deep, dank depression or you can act like an adult. Sure, sitting around and pouting may be more fun, but being an adult is more rewarding.

TOO OFTEN EXCHANGING Christmas gifts has moved from ritual to commodity trading. I know of a couple (unmarried) where she sets a dollar limit he must spend and then drops broad hints about what and from what stores would be acceptable.

Greedy? Maybe so, but it takes the guesswork out of giving, at least for that individual.

But there are those of us who believe that gifts should come from the heart — you know, that shriveled receptacle of our emotions. But it gets

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