



## Holiday Greetings from the Ware house...



Normal life moves in predicable stages. Out of college you get a job. Date. Find a mate. Buy a house. Have a child. Buy a bigger house. Have another child. Re-examine your career choice (“it seemed like a good idea at the time...”). Change careers. And if you are reasonably ambitious, make a mark in your field. These events begin in your twenties and continue to unfold over the next two or three decades. Mother nature has arranged for plenty of time to pass during this evolution, as each phase can be stressful. Especially if you choose “Plan B” which involves starting the entire process over with a new partner, midway through.

This brings me to my point—yes, there is one—which is that Jane and I after each opting for plan B, proceeded to do all of the above in three years. Which explains why I twitch a lot and carry on conversations out loud with myself in public places. I am kidding, of course. We don’t go to public places anymore. The reason: our two lovely daughters, Alexandra and Nicole.



As adorable as we think they are, others don’t always share that opinion. In fact, just last night they cleared out an entire section of Ruby Tuesday’s in about five minutes. (We refer to them as “stealth children” and have sent this information to the U.S. Military...)

Which brings me to my second point: Holiday Joy. The secret lies in your expectations. Holiday Joy is

achieved by scaling back your expectations to the barest minimum and then—getting realistic—cutting that by half.

For example, last Xmas, I refused to get all caught up in the yuletide sentiment, keeping my eye firmly fixed on the realities of two babies in diapers. With minimal expectations in place—i.e. that there would be at least one episode of projectile vomiting in the next 24 hours, one encounter with our dog breaking into the Diaper Genie and helping himself to some delectable holiday goodies, and one major family brawl—I confidently read the traditional “Night Before Christmas” poem and put the little darlings to bed.

Now for the funny part. By noon Christmas Day, we had crashed through the floor of our lowest expectations, as we headed with our 2 year old, Alexandra, to the emergency room at Lutheran General. Nothing life threatening, mind you, but Fate had chosen December 25 as the appropriate time for our oldest girl to pop a double hernia. Mom and Dad spent Christmas monitoring Alexandra’s IV tube to make sure she didn’t pull it out of her foot. (The doctors and nurses made seven attempts to find a vein in her arm and then gave up and went for the foot. You can imagine how much fun that was for all involved. And, to add to the giddiness, try explaining to a 2-year-old why she needs a sharp needle stuck in her foot for an extended period of time. Can you say, “Holiday Mirth?”) On top of all this happiness, every hour a shiny faced intern would appear in our hospital room to reexamine Alexandra...translation: retraumatize her. Shrieking, screaming, crying. It never failed. Just about the time we

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could quiet the poor little kid down—about 52 minutes of reading every book we had, playing with Barney, coloring, and bribing her with candy—another intern would arrive to re-start the process. Finally, daddy had had enough and explained to intern number 5 that his shiny stethoscope would be placed where only the proctologist could find it if he did not leave immediately. Remarkably, no other interns disturbed us.

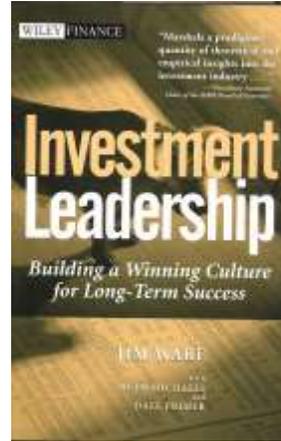
The following day, a very capable doctor repaired both ruptures and Alexandra was back home two hours after the surgery. This may have been when my twitching and talking out loud started.

With this backdrop, we can't help but be cautiously optimistic that this year's celebration will be wonderful by comparison.

And we have much to be thankful for. Janey enjoys her human resource work at Baxter and continues to wow them. I realize that every holiday letter makes exaggerated claims about the family's work experience: "Ivan is a prisoner in the Gulag Archipelago where he has been targeted for the fast track..." But in Janey's case it's true. She won a company trip to Hawaii based on her performance. Ordinarily, this would be quite good, but given that Jane was out 1/3 of the year on maternity leave, it seems remarkable. (Causing me and some of her co-workers to wonder, "what photos does she possess of whom doing what?")

For myself, my loosely-defined career allows me great freedom to write, speak, and consult on the topics of leadership and corporate culture. With the help of my consulting colleagues, I wrote my third book, "Investment Leadership" which was released by

Wiley & Sons in October. I can't say it's a stocking stuffer for the average person, but the financial community seems to like it.



Beyond that, both our moms will be with us for Christmas. That means I'll be spending the holidays with my wife, two moms, two baby girls, and a female nanny. Bucky (our German Shepherd) and I are badly outnumbered. So if you have any extra testosterone, send it our way. We can use it.

All the best from the Ware house,

