



## When your Quilting Mojo Takes a Holiday



Timeless Stitches — Quilt Capital of Kansas

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What's a quilter to do when they lose the drive to create? Many a quilter/crafter/artist has hit that proverbial wall at some point in their lives. However, when asked why, the answers may be wildly different for each depending on what part of the process they feel blocked on.

This past year was filled with enough ups and downs that required my attention be away from my creative endeavors that I left much of my quilting on the back burner. Family health issues created new stress and uncertainty. By the end of the year, I found I hadn't had nearly as many finishes as I typically would. I was starting new projects but was having trouble bringing them to fruition. As the stressful situation resolved towards the end of the year, I started looking at my quilting room with a different eye as I planned what the new year would bring.

My quilting mojo—the desire to sit down at my quilting machine to finish projects—had vanished. My stack of quilt tops waiting to be finished was growing significantly and we don't have the budget to send more than a couple of special quilts out to be done by area longarm quilters. Sooner or later, I would have to come up with a way to get myself quilting again. I asked myself whether I was internally comparing my work to that of others I follow and who I think of as quilting stars. I also wondered whether taking a long break last year had dulled my quilting skills as I sat and stared at a quilt and was clueless how to quilt it. These questions were good ones and each needed to be addressed separately.

There are extremely talented quilters whose God-given talents make it hard for many of us to think of ourselves as competent quilters. Their work is so inventive and extraordinary, it's hard to imagine how I could ever finish a quilt that would look half so good. I know I have to appreciate their talents and stop comparing myself. What I do when I quilt is still beautiful and I still have a few people bring their quilts to me to be quilted. Build yourself up and stop comparing.

On the second question, I had to admit I had allowed my quilting skills to grow rusty. I also know that once I sit down at the machine, I still know how to do my favorite designs. A little warm-up, an easy quilt to practice on, and I was soon back where I had left off months ago.

At a recent quilt guild meeting, a friend/peer shared some of her quilts and talked about how not all quilts need to have fancy or custom quilting. If the fabrics are busy, the quilting won't show anyway. Some patterns just need to be quilted with an all-over design, while other patterns ask for custom treatment. Knowing not every quilt needed to be custom quilted opened the possibility of moving forward by doing simple designs and just getting some quilts finished.

Talking with my husband about the projects in front of me, he helped come up with designs that would compliment the quilts but still be simple enough to complete quickly and easily. Taking this advice, within a week after January 1, I had two quilts fully quilted and bound. One used simple stitch-in-the-ditch and ruler quilting that was more than enough to hold the quilt layers together, while still complimentary to the quilt

design. On the other I used a stencil in each block that secured all the seams with a pretty design yet was quick and easy to finish.

Keeping it simple can be a hard concept for me sometimes. I also found it helpful to pull out several abandoned projects that needed binding and chose to bind fully by machine. By adding easy to finish projects to the quilts that can be quilted with simpler designs, I'm already getting projects finished. Here's hoping we can all find our mojo in whatever creative endeavor we embrace and have more finishes to enjoy! Then the next task is to decide whether to keep them, gift them, or bless and release them as donation items, or even possibly sell them. Those are hard decisions that will be addressed in an upcoming column.