

# SUCCESS+

## HOLIDAY HARMONY HANDBOOK

*A Guide to Peaceful Get-Togethers*



The holiday season, often idealized as magical and joyful, can sometimes become a source of stress and conflict.

To help with this, we've created a productive guide to get you through the holiday marathon in one happy piece.

Offering practical strategies to help you navigate the festive season amidst the differences and potential disappointments that come with this time of year, this proactive resource is your jolly ol' survival guide!

*Venture into the land of  
itchy sweaters, matching  
family photos, and  
awkward conversations  
with a plan and an exit  
strategy, just in case.*

First though... Let's be real for a second...

Why does it matter so much that this is a peaceful time of year?

Understanding exactly what you want out of the holiday season will help you get through the stressful parts.



# *Fa, La, La, La, Ugh...*

## 'TIS THE SEASON TO BE STRESSED

A combination of factors—from family dynamics to external pressures—can contribute to holiday-related anxiety and tension.

- **Diverse Beliefs and Values:** Differences in religious, political, or cultural beliefs within families can lead to misunderstandings and conflict.
- **Family Dynamics:** Complex family relationships, including strained ties or high expectations, can exacerbate stress.
- **High Expectations:** The pressure to create a "perfect" holiday can lead to disappointment and frustration.
- **Financial Stress and Gift-Giving:** The heavy burden of holiday expenses, including gifts, travel, and entertainment, can be overwhelming.
- **Travel Arrangements and Logistics:** The logistics of holiday travel, including booking flights, accommodations, and coordinating schedules, can add to stress.
- **Limited Time Together:** Busy schedules and long distances can limit the amount of quality time spent with loved ones and increase feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- **Election Year Stress:** Political differences can heighten emotions and create division within families and communities.
- **Substance Abuse and Addiction Issues:** The holiday season can be a particularly challenging time for individuals struggling with sobriety.
- **Busy Work Schedules:** Juggling work commitments with holiday preparations can lead to increased stress and burnout.



# *How to Not Ruin the Holidays*

## 1. SET BOUNDARIES AND ADDRESS NEEDS:

- **Open Communication:** Schedule a pre-holiday family meeting (or group text, email, etc.) to discuss sensitive topics and establish ground rules for respectful conversation. Consider creating a "family agreement" outlining expectations and boundaries.
- **Feasible Gathering Lengths:** Instead of long, marathon gatherings, opt for shorter, more frequent get-togethers. This can help reduce stress and fatigue for everyone involved.
- **Time Limits:** Allocate specific time slots for potentially contentious topics. Use a timer to keep discussions focused and prevent them from dominating the conversation.
- **Room to Retreat:** Designate a quiet space where you can escape to de-stress and recharge. This could be a private room, a quiet corner, or even a short walk outdoors.

## 2. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING:

- **Empathy:** Try to understand the other person's perspective, even if you disagree. Put yourself in their shoes and try to see the situation from their point of view.
- **Non-Defensive Listening:** Avoid interrupting and focus on what the other person is saying. Give them your full attention and resist the urge to formulate your response while they're still speaking.
- **Validate Feelings:** Acknowledge their emotions, even if you don't agree with them. For example, you could say, "I can understand why you're feeling hurt" or "It sounds like you're really frustrated."
- **Summarize and Paraphrase:** Restate what the other person has said in your own words to ensure you are understanding them. This can help prevent misunderstandings and show that you're actively listening.
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage the other person to share more about their thoughts and feelings by asking open-ended questions, such as "What else can you tell me about that?" or "How did that make you feel?"



### 3. CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES:

- **Prioritize Peace:** Let go of minor disagreements to preserve overall harmony. Sometimes, it's better to let things go rather than escalate a conflict.
- **Pick Your Moments:** Choose the right time and place to address important issues. Avoid discussing sensitive topics during important moments or when people are stressed or tired.

### 4. HUMOR AND LIGHTHEARTEDNESS:

- **Laughter:** Use humor (not sarcasm!) to diffuse tension and lighten the mood. Laughter can be a powerful tool for reducing stress and fostering connections.
- **Focus on the Positive:** Shift your focus to the positive aspects of the holiday season, such as spending time with loved ones and enjoying the festivities.
- **Shared Activities:** Engage in activities that bring people together, such as board games, cooking, or volunteering. Shared experiences can strengthen relationships and create lasting memories.
- **Holiday Traditions:** Embrace family traditions or create new ones. Traditions can help to foster a sense of connection and belonging.
- **Gratitude:** Focus on the good things in your life that you are thankful for by creating a gratitude list, writing about your blessings in a journal, or sharing your thoughts with loved ones at the dinner table.



## *Mindfulness Techniques:*

### MEDITATION

Dedicate a few minutes each day to meditation. Focus on your breathing and let go of your worries.

### DEEP BREATHING

Practice deep, slow breaths to calm your mind and body.

### MINDFULNESS WALKS

Take a short walk in nature and pay attention to your senses.

## *Prioritize Self-Care:*

### SCHEDULE SELF-CARE

Make time for activities that you enjoy, such as reading, taking a bath, or spending time in nature.

### DON'T OVER-COMMIT YOURSELF

Learn to say "no" to requests that will overwhelm you.

### FOCUS ON HEALTHY HABITS

Maintain a healthy diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly.

## *Stress Relief Techniques:*

### HAVE A GO-TO PERSON

Identify someone you can call or text when you need to vent or de-stress and talk to them.

### TAKE A TIME-OUT

Excuse yourself from a stressful situation and take a short break.



## *Affirmations for the Season:*

"I am grateful for the love and support of my family and friends."

"I am capable of handling stress in a healthy way."

"I am at peace with myself and the present moment."

"I am a vessel of infinite potential, constantly evolving and growing."

# *Resolve It Once and For All... and To All a Good Night!*

*Navigating heated discussions during the holiday season can require a variety of approaches, from direct negotiation to indirect strategies like mediation and respectful disengagement.*

## DIRECT CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

- **Negotiation:** Find a middle ground that satisfies both parties' needs. Active listening and compromise are key.
- **Compromise:** Be willing to give and take to reach a mutually agreeable solution.
- **"I" Statements:** Express your feelings and needs without blaming or accusing the other person. For example, "I feel hurt when you say that" instead of "You always say hurtful things."

## INDIRECT CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

- **Mediation:** Involve a neutral third party to facilitate communication and help find a solution.
- **Respectful Disengagement:** If a conversation becomes too heated or unproductive, politely excuse yourself and take a break. You don't have to engage in every discussion, especially if it's not constructive. Simply say, "I need to take a break. Let's revisit this later when we've had time to reflect."



# *Forgiveness: A Gift to Yourself*



*Let go of resentment and move forward. Holding onto anger can only harm you.*

## WHAT IT IS:

- **Releasing the Past:**  
Let go of negative feelings and grudges.
- **Choosing Peace:**  
Prioritize your own well-being over resentment.
- **Moving Forward:**  
Focus on the present and look toward the future

## WHAT IT ISN'T:

- **Forgetting:**  
You can still acknowledge the hurt but choose not to let it define you.
- **Condoning:**  
You can understand the actions of others without agreeing with them.
- **Weakness:**  
Forgiveness is a sign of strength and maturity.

## *Remember:*

### IT'S OKAY TO DISAGREE

Differences of opinion are normal and healthy.

### FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

Shift the conversation to shared interests and positive memories.

### PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

Let go of past hurts and focus on the present.

