

A Self-Care Checklist for Surviving the Holidays

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The holidays are upon us, which brings a lot of happy celebrations. The holidays can also bring a lot of difficult emotional triggers, such as painful memories, **grief** for family members who can't be with us, or challenging dynamics with family members who are with us.

Use this checklist to plan your self-care so that you can enjoy the upcoming holidays to their fullest:

1. Take time for yourself.

It is easy to feel lost or overwhelmed during all of the holiday hubbub. Even if you are not at home for the holidays, plan ways to make space and time for yourself to decompress. Seek out a quiet space from time to time where you can collect your thoughts and recenter yourself as need be.

2. Connect with your breath.

The holiday season can trigger all kinds of anxiety: **social anxiety**, performance **anxiety**, worry about family interactions, or just plain old holiday stress. Tuning into your breath will give you a good sense of your anxiety level.

Is your heart racing or breathing quickened? Then it is probably a good time to slow down with some deep breaths. Breathe gently and deeply in moments of holiday stress, giving yourself permission to let go of all of the distractions around you to just breathe — even if only for a moment.

3. Be mindful about drug and alcohol use.

The holidays are filled with fun gatherings and parties, which sometimes also means lots and lots of alcohol will be around. You may feel tempted to use drugs and alcohol to take the edge off of holiday stress or as a form of joyful celebration.

Should you decide to use drugs or consume alcohol, try being mindful and intentional about your use. Pick a personal limit that feels healthy and realistic. Check in with yourself before your next glass to make a conscious decision about your use and to know when it is time to take a break.

4. Practice a healthy relationship with food.

You might feel subtle or not-so-subtle peer pressure to stuff your belly with all of those delicious holiday treats. Find balance for yourself by enjoying special holiday food, while also paying attention to your body's cues of hunger, fullness and satiation. Check in with yourself from time to time to ask whether you are eating because your body is hungry or whether you are eating out reaction to some form of stress.

Food has restorative and nutritive qualities, but food can also take its toll as easily as drugs and alcohol if you are feeling out of control with what you eat. Treat yourself and also respect yourself in the process by maintaining a healthy relationship with food.

5. Take care of yourself during difficult interactions with family.

The holiday season often means being in spaces with people who you may not see the rest of the year. Sometimes this means seeing family or individuals who you would rather avoid because of past hurts. Pay attention to difficult family dynamics and take steps to get the support you need.

Consider having a special self-care buddy — someone who you can check in with either in-person or over text to talk about how you are feeling. The [crisis text line](#) is another support that you can use if you are not sure who to reach out to in a moment of stress.

6. Make room for grief during the holidays if you are missing loved ones who have passed.

Consider making a place at the table, having a moment of silence, or sharing favorite memories of loved ones who are missed during the holiday season. Joy and sadness can exist in the very same moment, so leave room for both as much as you need.

7. Remember that holiday stress *will* pass.

Keeping a strong sense of self during the holiday season will give you a sense of consistency and security during the ups and downs of the holiday season. Enjoy this time, while knowing that the stress of this season will eventually come to a close.

Be kind to yourself. And happy holidays!