

5 Tips for Navigating the Holiday Season Well

The holidays can come with a mixed bag of emotions and experiences. If you find yourself anxious about the upcoming days, here are five tips for navigating the season.

1 Set Realistic Expectations

You don't even have to do anything differently yet! Just noticing the choices you make can help you shift your mindset from always "looking for the easy way out" to "I can do hard things."

2 Name That Feeling

It can be helpful to identify exactly what's causing the unrest inside you, and to talk to someone you trust about it. Set aside time to process your emotions with your spouse, a trusted friend, or a therapist. What's troubling you? Is it a complicated relationship with your mom or dad? Is it seeing a family member who triggers painful memories? Is it the first holiday season after the passing of a loved one? Identifying your emotions and the root causes beneath them can help you be less reactive and more responsive.

3 Know Your Boundaries

Feeling overwhelmed with life? Finances tighter than ever? Maybe this is the year to say "no" more than you say "yes" to all the extra holiday commitments and purchases. Figure out what is absolutely necessary, and save the rest for another year. Look for ways to lighten your workload and clearly communicate your boundaries to others.

Nervous about extended time with extended family? Spend some time processing what feels safe and what doesn't, and give yourself permission to leave when things take a turn. It can be helpful to think through situations that might require setting a boundary – see our additional "Setting Boundaries" handout for more information.

4 Take Care of Yourself

As you anticipate the emotions the holidays can bring, be intentional about taking care of yourself. Spend time reflecting on things that promote wellness and lasting joy and incorporate them into this season. This includes moving your body daily, engaging in a hobby, balancing comfort foods and nutrient dense foods, drinking water, connecting with others who are safe, and establishing moments of rest and healthy sleep habits.

5 Look For the Good

The Lord is in all things and He covers all things with His care. Every broken relationship and wounded heart and single tear – He sees it and He cares. Look for the ways in which God is working, and don't be afraid to come to Him when it doesn't seem like He's there. He promises He will never leave us, and we can hold confidently to that truth even when it feels like the world is falling apart. Turn off the screens, slow down, take a deep breath, and be present so you don't miss all that God is doing both in you and around you.