

HOLIDAYS 2.0:

Reimagining

the Most Wonderful Time of Year



It's the most wonderful time of the year! Except this year, it's going to be...different. **For many of us, the 2020 holidays just won't be quite the same,** and that certainly brings up a lot of feelings.

What does different look like during a time of year when tradition is usually the rule? How do we make this season merry and bright when our energy is low, our patience is shot, and we're mentally and emotionally weary? How do we deal with those tricky family relationships that have peaked and valleyed over the course of 2020?

Here are some tips for navigating this unique holiday season while taking care of yourself, your relationships, and finding ways to appreciate the meaning and joy of the season.



1. Make plans that are in sync with your values, needs, and wants.

A reluctant yes can quickly turn into a resentful yes, especially during the holidays.

2. Holidays are not the best time to work through conflict.

High expectations, lots of stress, and jam-packed schedules can combine to create emotionally intense situations. In other words, now is probably not the time to discuss with Aunt Sharon how her political posts offend you, or to try and resolve years of relationship stress with your estranged sibling.

Do what you need to do to keep yourself emotionally safe and healthy, but it might be best to wait until after the first of the year to address conflict.

3. Be an observer.

Spending time with family can be meaningful and wonderful, but it can also be incredibly triggering. We all play certain roles in our families. No matter how far we may live from our family, or how much we have grown since we left home, when we get back with our family, we naturally fall back into those old roles. This can feel uncomfortable and create a great deal of stress. Rather than fully engaging in those old patterns and dynamics, instead observe.

Observe the family patterns, observe your own feelings, and choose to react in a way that is different from those old ways in order to diminish relational stress.

4. Allow yourself to acknowledge and grieve hard things.

If your holidays are going to look different this year, allow yourself to name and grieve those differences. Give yourself permission to feel sad for the traditions you're missing or the people who are absent. Think of ways to acknowledge or honor these losses. Also, give yourself permission to do something totally different this year.

Maybe instead of the traditional Christmas dinner, think outside the box in your meal planning. These differences can feel like a loss, and they can also provide an opportunity to try some new, fun things!

5. Manage your expectations.

Remember that this year has been difficult on everyone. Your loved ones are also feeling at the end of their ropes and weary with the events of this year. Maybe this isn't the year to expect the "perfect Christmas." Instead, think about what you want to remember about this season.

Think about the tone you want to create for your holidays and focus your energies there. Give an extra measure of grace for yourself and others as we head into the end of the year.

6. Hope, Expect, Prepare*

HOPE that whatever situation you might feel anxious about is going to go well with everyone getting along.

EXPECT that it might go as it has gone in years past.

PREPARE for how you are going to handle the situation so that you feel in control of the situations and your emotions

**credit: Courtney Robbins*

