



Festive Five Holiday Guide

How will you make the most of your holidays this year? It's a small pocket of time where we often cram a million and one things into, but it does not have to be that way. Here are some small but practical ways to make your holidays about caring for others, being thankful, and getting some "me" time.

Tip 1. Set an **intention** for the season.



Setting an intention for the holidays includes both **what you want to do** and **how you want to be**. It's a specific goal that involves an action and a mindset. For example, you might want to have a family outing (action) and you also might want to be more patient (mindset). Using these lines, write out your intention for this season. Don't wait too long to fill this out before things get busy. Set aside just 5 minutes to really think about this and write it out.

Tip 2. Have a **game plan** for potentially tense situations.

"Anticipate stressful situations you might encounter and be prepared with a few words to help maintain a sense of calm" says Kristin Taliaferro, Master Certified life and career coach. For example, if your mother-in-law tends to criticize your parenting style, think about how you'll respond to her. You might say, "I love how much you care and help out with the kids," and recognize her intention is really just caring for your kids. Jot down potentially tense situations that can happen. What will be your game plan to stay calm?



Tip 3. Do things that **bring you together** with other people.

For those of us who are facing the holidays alone, it may seem like we're the only ones without people to see and places to go. That is not true! There are many people who are also spending the holidays by themselves or simply prefer it. Here are some ways to engage

yourself with the local community or even with close family members you have not seen in a long time.

- ❖ Volunteer to help those who need it
- ❖ Do something with friends
- ❖ Organize a party for other people who are alone during the holidays
- ❖ Take part in community events and activities
- ❖ Attend a service at a local church
- ❖ Look for singles' organizations or other social clubs that are holding special events
- ❖ Visit an elderly relative or neighbor who is also alone



Tip 4. Take care of your **mind, body, and behaviour.**

MIND

- spend a minute focusing on and savouring all the **positive experiences** associated with the holidays. This helps the experiences enter our long-term emotional memory and sink in.
- It is inevitable that you will think about “shoulds” and “musts”. Return to the simple fullness of being in the present, not regretting the past or worrying about or planning the future.

BODY

- Our sympathetic nervous system gets activated during stressful and anxious situations
- The solution is to **activate the parasympathetic nervous system**: have I-o-n-g exhalations, relax the tongue, warm the hands, loosen the shoulders, relax the body as a whole.

ACTIONS

- Slow down and do less!
 - Take deep breaths when you are shopping for gifts, doing dishes, wrapping presents, or visiting friends
 - Remember others may be struggling during the holidays too so be kind and compassionate
 - Consider giving the gift of **your full attention to others, gifts of forgiveness, gratitude, and wholeheartedness**, rather than being distracted by your to-do list
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Tip 5. Let go of **unrealistic expectations.**

We all know and feel the pressure of creating that “perfect holiday.” But is that really what the holidays are all about? Now is the time to let go of all the unrealistic expectations you may have about the holidays, and **create your own traditions**. So, take your time, relax, renew, and most importantly, *enjoy* a joyful holiday season.

Source: <https://familyservicesottawa.org/>, <http://psychcentral.com/>