

Tips for a Holiday You'll Enjoy—*Be Holiday Happy!*

Looking to have less stress during the holidays? During the period between Thanksgiving and the New Year, we may envision a relaxing, enjoyable season, but we often have the opposite experience. We can become irritable, cranky, feel rushed, overwhelmed, and even feel a bit out of control. When feeling pressured, people can be tactless, rude, and even confrontational. Everyone has a story to tell of a past season where they witnessed or heard of someone's unbelievable behavior. The right amount of planning can be a huge help in maintaining your sense of calm and control during the holidays.



1. **Start your planning early. First, jot down some fun things you would like to do** – with family, friends, coworkers, or just yourself. It's important to be realistic here given the constraints we are facing due to the ongoing pandemic. Pick a few and note what you need to do to set up the experience. Simple activities can often be better than complex ones.
2. **Next, jot down some anticipated or expected frustrations** that you believe you'll encounter along the way. Why? If you've acknowledged that certain things may happen, you're in a position to decide *ahead of time* how you will manage these difficulties. Include things like:
 - ✓ disagreements with family members or friends
 - ✓ not being able to go to all of the activities you'd like
 - ✓ feeling compelled to attend activities that you don't want to attend
 - ✓ concerns about spending
 - ✓ not getting time away from work
 - ✓ getting the 'right' gifts
 - ✓ travel issues
 - ✓ staying safe

Planning can include creating **thought-out responses** to situations you anticipate will be difficult or uncomfortable. (Writing out what you plan to say is a really helpful thing to do.) Another type of planning is **having an alternate** plan or idea if your first choice of an activity or thing (e.g., gift, food, travel, entertainment) doesn't pan out.

3. **Plan a couple of periods of unstructured time**, from an hour to a day. Maybe plan an unstructured, improvised day of fun with no particular plans – think them up along the way.
4. Ask yourself in times of stress or indecision, **‘What is reasonable?’** This can help you get back on track so you can choose a healthier action, reaction, or response.
5. **Use your planning tools.** Here are a couple of ideas to help you along the way:
 - a. [Holiday Budget Worksheet](#) - This can help you take control over where your money is going. Not knowing what you've spent can create anxiety and stress, and it can leave you with January headaches.
 - b. [Budget List for Gifts](#) - This worksheet is a great way to organize your thoughts and plans around one of the biggest types of holiday expenses. And it's better than using the back of an envelope.
6. During and after the holidays are over, **congratulate yourself on your successes.** Small changes are important here, because *they give us a base that we can continue to grow, refine, and improve* what we're working to accomplish.

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