

THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE AGAIN!

For some, the holidays are met with eager anticipation...for others, dread and anxiety. Trust us, if it weren't the case, we could get away with not writing new 5M2T editions on this topic each year. Since avoiding the holidays altogether is unrealistic, learning to "go with the flow" and preparing for what's to come while maintaining composure is the better course of action.



It's understandable that for some unpleasant thoughts and feelings emerge at the first sight of holiday decorations, advertisements, and sales events – these can be triggers for unpleasant memories and difficult anniversaries. Parents are especially prone to stress during the holidays. Keeping things "merry and bright" and magically afloat for the little ones can feel like unicycle riding while juggling chainsaws – i.e. not terribly magical, and tinged with pressure and anxiety that can even lead to feelings of resentment.

Don't worry, we've got some tips to keep you squared away during the holidays, achieve world peace, become a better person, and all that good stuff:

1. **Keep routines** – they provide comfort, predictability and stability. When you've got more things to do than hours in a day, routines will keep you on track & the kiddos happy and pacified.
2. **Practice self-care EVERY DAY** – doing it first thing in the morning increases the likelihood that it will happen. Your routine can include 15 minutes to read, pray, think, listen to music, savor music, COFFEE – anything that rejuvenates you. Next, head out and own your day!
3. **Get out of your head** – holidays (and quarantine) include periods of mindless boredom, causing our brains to seek novelty & stimulation. Occasionally, we appease our brains by giving our thoughts greater attention or weight than is useful. Instead, satisfy your brain by going outside, even for just 10 seconds. It's one way to avoid existential crises and dumb arguments with yourself & others.
4. **Eat mindfully** – Don't inhale those holiday favorites quickly. Take small bites, slow down, and savor them. Doing this will help you feel full sooner and in charge of your urges. It will also reduce the likelihood of holiday weight gain.
5. **Communicate.** The more meaningful connections we have, the healthier we tend to be. That said, maintaining just one meaningful relationship during the busy holidays can do the trick.
6. **Think Better.** What do rumination and singing the "12 Days of Christmas" have in common? Both are painful experiences that leave you feeling worse off than when you started. Because we often attribute greater significance to our thoughts during the holidays, we need to be careful recognize self-defeating thought loops. If you catch yourself in a downward spiral, refer to tip #3.

Incorporating these tips will help you feel calmer about life during the holidays. It won't change the holidays themselves, but how you respond to them, which is the more important and realistic goal.

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