

THE RESILIENCY FACTOR

SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION 2022

Tips for Enjoying the Holidays



“You’ll Always be my Baby!”: Coping when old family dynamics disrupt Holiday visits *Adapted from AARP publication, Nov 2022*

When everyone packs into Grandma’s house for the holidays, no matter their age, family members often fall (or get dragged) into their old childhood roles. Even adults who now have kids of their own and successful careers can be made to feel like children again. Following are some tips to help keep the peace and avoid misunderstandings....

Tips for Adult Children

Set boundaries.

Before getting together, tell parents, siblings, or other attendees of any off-limit topics, such as politics or stories from your childhood.

Prepare for the weird.

Visualize how you wish to react if treated inappropriately. Is it best to respond with humor, with sternness, or by doing a breathing exercise?

Designate a support person.

Call a friend when you need a break from your family, or have your spouse or sibling distract the relative if they cross your boundaries, allowing you to gracefully step-away.

Tips for Parents

Discuss the visit ahead of time.

Talk to each of your children separately about what they’re hoping to get out of the visit and their preferences around the agenda.

Don’t keep them down.

Children grow and change. Keep an open mind and get to know them as adults, rather than focusing on who they were as children.

Schedule individual time.

Group activities can sometimes be a recipe for conflict. Arrange to meet one-on-one with family members to create space for more personal and focused interaction.



What is Your Drinking IQ?

If you feel like alcohol is negatively impacting your life, or you’re just uncomfortable with your habits, it may be time to ask yourself a few tough but important questions. If the answers cause you to wonder whether it’s time to re-evaluate your relationship with alcohol, reach out to someone who can help you explore it further.

1. Are you drinking more frequently than usual?
2. Do you need more alcohol to achieve the same effect?
3. Have you unsuccessfully tried to cut back on drinking?
4. Is alcohol effecting your relationships with spouse, children, family, friends, or co-workers?
5. Is alcohol effecting your daily functioning at home, school, or work?
6. Has anyone else commented on your alcohol habits? Do you try to hide your drinking because you’re worried someone might find out?
7. Are you using alcohol to cope with anxiety, depression, life-stressors, worry, feelings of loneliness or unhappiness, sleep problems, or other physical or mental health conditions?
8. Do you find reasons to drink more than usual such as during the holidays, while on vacation, at a party or bar, or because it’s the weekend? Do you create something to celebrate so you can drink?
9. Do you use alcohol to boost your courage, loosen up, or overcome shyness when attending a party or other social event?
10. Do you have any health issues or take medication that when mixed with alcohol would be harmful to you or cause a problem?

*Need immediate support for substance use?
Call the 24/7 SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357.*

More Tips for Enjoying the Holidays



Solo for the Holidays? Make the most of it.

Despite the cultural expectation that we should be surrounded by loved ones during the holidays, spending that time alone doesn't mean you're unloved or failing at life; nor is it about your ability or your worth. You may be new to an area, or your friends are elsewhere; seeing loved ones may not be an option or a choice at this time, you may have suffered a recent loss, or you may just want a break. Whatever the reason, the constant bombardment of images and messaging of what the perfect holiday looks like, may leave us feeling lonely and unfulfilled. But it doesn't have to be that way. Spending the time reconnecting to yourself and to what inspires you can make your time meaningful and rewarding.

- 1. Treat yourself in a memorable or nostalgic way.** Dive into a book you've been eager to read, take a weekend getaway to your favorite spot, or spend a few days off just relaxing. Taking care of yourself can go a long way toward protecting your emotional health.
- 2. Remember who and what you have.** It's easy to fixate on who you can't be with or what you're not doing over the holidays, and forget about the ones you *can* be with or what you *can* be doing. Go into the season with some intent to work on growing your relationships and pursuing your interests.
- 3. Set whatever tone you want.** One of the best things about being an adult is that your holiday can look any way you want! Celebrate, don't celebrate; just let yourself feel those feelings and set the tone for your holiday season in whatever way makes sense for you.
- 4. Create new traditions.** Whether you involve others or not in this endeavor, choose some activities or events that can become seasonal traditions and give you something to anticipate or plan for in seasons to come.
- 5. Reset old expectations.** You probably grew up associating certain traditions with the holidays and expecting them to occur every year. But if the pandemic years taught us anything, it is the importance of being flexible and embracing the unexpected. Find joy in trying something new and start setting new expectations.
- 6. Volunteer your time.** Whether remote or in person, helping others or involving yourself in a cause that is meaningful to you is not only rewarding, but will help you feel connected to the world around you.
- 7. Practice hospitality.** Hospitality is about making others feel special and cared about and can extend beyond your home. Consider all the people who make your life easier or provide a valued service. Leave them a note, drop off a treat, or share some of your time with them.
- 8. Get in touch with your spiritual side.** Take time to think about what the holidays mean to you, what you're looking for in the new year, and the beauty and complexity of being human, even when it's hard to find. You may want to read some introspective or spiritual books that you may not have given attention to before.
- 9. Be strategic (and consistent) about combating loneliness.** Exercise, take a class, or engage in an activity where you will interact with other people on a regular basis. With enough consistency you will begin to experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- 10. Start a journal.** There is something liberating about releasing your thoughts onto paper. There is no right or wrong way to journal. You can do it as often or as little as you like; you can write paragraphs, jot down a few random words, or be artistic.
- 11. Share your appreciation of the people in your life.** Thanking others and showing gratitude releases neurochemicals responsible for happiness, motivation, and the alleviation of stress. More, it helps you appreciate the small things in life and to live life more mindfully.
- 12. Have a TV marathon.** Sometimes what we need more than anything is to escape into a world that expects nothing from us, at least for a little while. Shut down any feelings of guilt or self-judgement, turn off your phone, get comfortable, and just indulge.
- 13. Attack the day.** Whether planning a day of rest or activity, wake up and get going on it. Prepare for what your day ahead of time so you have more time for enjoyment and less time to ruminate on negative thoughts and feelings.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Always the day before Thanksgiving, it's a time when survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience. This year, the date is **November 19**. If you have questions please contact:

Gena Orlando, Area Director, AFSP Wisconsin

email: gorlando@afsp.org phone: 414-216-4180

For more information go to: <https://afsp.org/international-survivors-of-suicide-loss-day>