

RECLAIM YOUR HOLIDAY



TABLE HEALTH

Reclaim Your Holiday

BE INTENTIONAL



Plan a household discussion or series of discussions where you will follow the steps outlined in this workbook. Be creative about how to accomplish this based on your household. This process can be a series of formal meetings, conversations around the dinner table, or informal queries performed by you as time and opportunity arise. The important thing is to honor everyone's preferences and ideas without placing undue pressure on those less inclined to plan and/or participate in holiday traditions.

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DETERMINE YOUR VALUES



Holidays are important breaks from routine and have great potential to revive our energy. Sadly, many people allow their energy to be zapped by stressors because they are engaging in someone else's holiday values. Knowing your values and deepest desires for celebrating holidays is important, because these values will inform your decisions about what to do (and what not to do!) during the holidays.

Mark the lines below to gain a sense of where your holiday values and preferences lie. Then discuss with family members.

Nostalgic

Modern

Religious

Secular

Homey/Crafty

New/Commercial

Enjoy exchanging gifts

Don't like gift exchanges

Enjoy holiday activities

Enjoy resting

Time with nuclear family

Time with extended family

Serve self and/or family

Serve community

Budget

No financial limits

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MEANINGFUL TRADITIONS



Traditions are meaningful ways to connect with family, friends, and community on a deeper level. Traditions are valuable in developing identity and a sense of belonging. Yet, traditions can also become a burden, if they are no longer meaningful, if newer traditions are important to you and your family, or if you are a new family navigating the development of your own traditions.

Answer the following questions and talk it over with your spouse or partner and if relevant, other household members who are old enough.

Which traditions from your family of origin (the family you grew up in) and community are extremely meaningful to you?

Which traditions from your first family and community are less meaningful, impractical, or difficult for you to continue every year?

Which traditions from your first family and community would you be happy to let go?

Are there new traditions you enjoy?

What are the most important traditions you would like to pass on to the next generation and/or share with your friends/community?

What roles do the following things play in your ideal holiday? Be specific about feelings and particular details about what you really enjoy most.

Food

Music

Gifts

Activities

Other

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ALIGN ACTIVITIES WITH VALUES



Having clarity about your values and traditions is the first step. The next step is to align your activities with your values. This can be difficult, especially if you have extended family, friends, work, school, church, and other organizations in your life. Each of them may vie for your time by having their own traditions or celebrations.

Use the following checklist to align your activities with values. Start by putting everything on your calendar that must be done (self-care, work, and other daily activities) and then all the holiday traditions that are most important to you and your household (based on your values). Only participate in other things if there is time and space in your life.

_____ Be realistic about time. First put on your calendar all the daily things you must do despite the holidays: self-care, work, caring for children, household responsibilities, etc.

_____ Don't skip self-care - this is why people get sick and stressed during the holidays! Put in time for self-care activities like meditation/prayer, movement, preparing healthy meals, time for important relationships like date night and family time. Add extra self-care activities like massages, long hikes, and time for personal reflection. The need for extra self-care is especially great during the holidays because of the busyness, potential stress, junk foods, and darkness.

_____ Staying home with no agenda other than rest and connection with family is a legitimate activity. Add some healing home time, and don't give it up. If something comes up that you must do, shuffle your schedule to make up the planned home time later on. Don't skip it.

_____ Now add in time for your most important holiday traditions and activities. Make sure each member of your household gets to choose their favorite(s). There will likely be a moment when your calendar is full. That's the cue to stop adding things to do.

_____ This is when you have to make a serious commitment to stick to your plan and start saying 'no'. Saying 'no' is actually a very important skill that most successful people have mastered. They are successful because they don't try to do everything. They focus on doing fewer things really well. In other words, they recognize and respect their limits. Here are some important phrases to keep in your back pocket:

- "Let me think about that and get back to you in a few days."
- "I'm sorry, I/we don't have the space in our life right now, so I/we have to decline."
- "I don't have the energy to dedicate to that right now and think you would be best served by choosing someone else to fill that role."
- "It's important to me/us to spend time with you, but this is a difficult time of year to do so. Is there a time after the holidays when we can get together?"
- "We really appreciate the invitation, but our family really needs some down time this season, so we're going to have to decline."

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HONOR BOUNDARIES & PEOPLE



You may end up needing to have some difficult conversations. Not everyone in your life will be completely understanding and supportive. If this is true for you - if you expect pushback from anyone - it's especially important to honor appropriate boundaries you've set around your household's values, traditions, and needs.

Don't be afraid to say 'no thanks' to traditions and celebrations, even if you are expected to participate or have always participated in the past. Never forget that you are the only human who has legitimate authority over your time.

If you expect to have difficulty with one or more people in your life, keep in mind the following:

- Be honest, straightforward, and polite when you communicate your plans or decline an invitation. Don't apologize, because you haven't done anything wrong. But do be understanding about the disappointment another person may feel.
 - "We aren't doing this to offend you but to take the best care of our own family."
 - "We have to pare down our holiday schedule. Is it more important to you if we do THIS or THAT?"
- Plan ahead - don't communicate your boundaries at the last minute or when there is already a specific plan in place (you have committed to a certain event or activity AND your participation is integral to its success).
- Always remember:
 - "The only people who are offended by your boundaries are people who abuse them."
 - Honoring your boundaries enhances relationships over time.

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INTENTIONAL GIFT GIVING IS BEING CONSCIOUS ABOUT WHAT YOU PUT INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS



Discuss with your family about gifts and the intention behind giving. Make sure your gifts align with your agreed upon and shared family values. A few ideas to consider:

- Experiences: self-care like a massage or fitness package, sports lesson, music lesson.
- Handmade gifts - wearable textiles like scarves, hats, bath salts, nourishing teas, or kombucha.
- Artwork - repurpose children's artwork into practical goods like wall art, fridge magnets, kitchen towels, etc.
- Name Draw - Suggest drawing names to create more focus on one person.
- Acts of Service: offer to babysit, remove snow for a neighbor, cook dinner, etc.
- Donation - make an honorary donation to a charity in your loved ones name.
- Community Service- One of the most satisfying, fun, and productive ways to unite as a family is volunteering for community service projects.

Some community services projects to consider:

- Donate and deliver food to a local pantry
- Donate to a toy and/or coat drive for local children
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter to service food, clean, or make holiday cards for those that are needing a safe place to stay.
- Volunteer for a non-profit like the humane society.