



10 STEPS TO MINIMIZE FAMILY STRESS DURING THE *holidays*

The holiday season can be a time of mixed emotions for many people. While feelings of hope and excitement are common, they can sometimes be accompanied by uncertainty, loneliness, and sadness. Fortunately, by following these tips, you can make the most of the season and enjoy a fulfilling and less stressful time.

PLAN AHEAD

Speak with your partner about who you will visit and for how long. Have a signal for when you need to take a break (such as a wink or touch of the shoulder.)

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Family members that have pushed your buttons in the past will continue to do so. Decide how you will either spend less time around them or redirect the conversation.

SET BOUNDARIES (AND PRACTICE ENFORCING THEM)

Identify what your boundaries are and communicate them. It

is easy to fall into past familial patterns. Consider practicing holding boundaries in a safe space, such as with a trusted friend or with a therapist. If you are hosting, set boundaries with everyone on your guest list. For example, mention conversational topics that are off limits or ask that alcohol is not brought into your home if that causes problems.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Identifying what you are grateful for helps with your mindset. Be sure to include family members that you have strained relationships with. This can help to shine a light on their positive attributes for you.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY

If you are experiencing shortness of breath, a tight chest, sweaty palms, or other signs of stress when thinking about spending time with family – pay attention. If it continues, consider requesting a **Village EAP appointment** to speak with a counselor.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Do something each day that fills your cup! Dance. Sing. Go for a bike ride, a walk, or ice skating. Play a favorite song. Call a friend that makes you laugh. Write down three things that made you mad today then cross them off and tell them to take a hike! (You get the idea.)

DO LESS

We have full lives without all the extra things that we add to our plates during the holiday season. Speaking of plates, try paper plates for your holiday dinner. Less dishes for one meal a year? Sounds good to me!

PLAN ACTIVITIES

We may be less likely to get into an argument if we are busy having fun playing a game, sledding, ice skating, or watching a movie.

GO HOME

There is not a rule that a person needs to spend all their time with their family for the holidays. It is okay to limit your time and then snuggle in for a nice relaxing evening at home doing whatever you would like to fill your own cup.

ASK FOR HELP

Call your (strictly confidential) **Village EAP** today **800-627-8220**. Talking with a therapist can provide you with a fresh, unbiased perspective to help navigate difficult family dynamics.



As you look towards this season, take time now to plan, set realistic expectations and remember to prioritize your well-being. From our Village EAP family to yours, we wish you the merriest of holiday cheers and a happy and prosperous new year as we approach 2024.



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Jara is passionate about helping businesses connect with The Village's EAP through The Village Business Institute. She believes in the positive impact that The Village's services make on an organization, by supporting employees in their personal and professional lives. She has a degree in Special Education with minors in Business Admin and Psychology from MSUM.