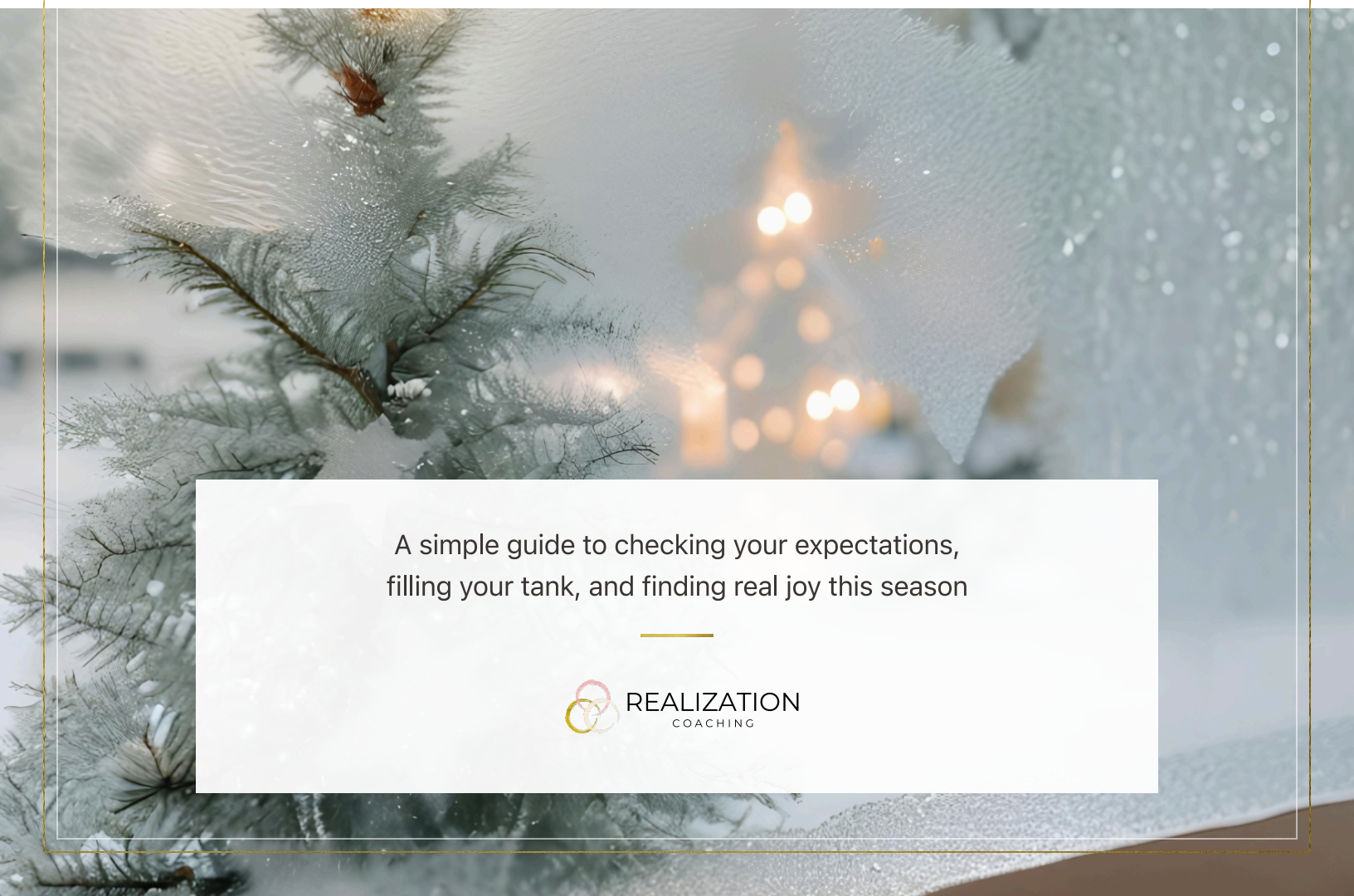
A HOLIDAY GUIDE

ENJOY

THE HOLIDAYS

(Even When Everything's Working Against You)



A simple guide to checking your expectations,
filling your tank, and finding real joy this season

REALIZATION
COACHING



BEFORE WE BEGIN

A NOTE FROM JENNY

Every year, somewhere between Halloween and Christmas, I find myself having the same conversation with almost every client I work with.

We all know the people in our lives. We know who drinks too much, who's going to criticize the stuffing, who's going to bring up politics before the rolls hit the table. And then the holidays roll around and we get a kind of amnesia. We picture the ski lodge. Matching sweaters, a crackling fire, everyone laughing and getting along.

Then reality shows up, and we're hurt, disappointed, and exhausted.

I do it too. Every year I imagine my whole family curled up on the couch watching movies with popcorn, like when the kids were little. And every year my husband gently reminds me: we have teenagers. They want to be in their rooms. Nobody can sit through a movie without their phone.

Here's the good news. You don't need a perfect family or a perfect season to enjoy the holidays. You need a few simple skills, and you need to practice them on purpose.

That's what this guide is for. Grab a pen, a cup of something warm, and give yourself twenty quiet minutes. Your future self (the one sitting at that holiday table) will thank you.

With love,

Jenny



START HERE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide walks you through five simple practices. Each one has a short reading, a few reflection questions, and a quick exercise.

01 Check Your Expectations

02 Know Your Outcome

03 Relatives vs. Family

04 Fill Your Tank

05 Choose Your Grounding Point

At the end you'll find a Plot Twist Reset for the tough moments and a Daily Holiday Check-In you can print and use every day this season.

You don't have to do it all at once. Start with one section. The point isn't to get it perfect. The point is to show up to the holidays awake instead of on autopilot.

> The two biggest holiday traps I see every year: unconscious expectations and overwhelm.

01

PRACTICE ONE

CHECK YOUR EXPECTATIONS

READING

Most holiday disappointment doesn't come from what happens. It comes from what we expected to happen and never noticed we were expecting.

Those are unconscious expectations. They sneak in quietly, and you usually don't discover them until you're standing in the kitchen feeling resentful and you're not even sure why.

Here's how it plays out for me. I expect a cozy movie night. Instead everyone has plans with friends, different schedules, and their phones. If I don't catch that expectation ahead of time, I keep trying to force something that was never going to happen. Then I take it personally. Then I'm wrapping presents feeling like I'm doing it for a bunch of ungrateful people who don't want to spend time with me.

None of that is true. The only problem was what I was expecting.

I have a puppy. If I leave her alone for hours, she will destroy something. I can know that and plan for it, or I can pretend it won't happen and be devastated when I come home to a chewed-up rug. But the rug was never a surprise.

The same goes for the people in your life. If your uncle drinks too much, he'll drink too much on Thanksgiving. If your mother is critical, she'll be critical at Christmas. That's not cynicism. That's awareness, and awareness protects your heart.

“The rug was never a surprise.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When you picture this holiday season, what does it look like? Be honest, even if it's a little Hallmark movie.

Who are you expecting to act differently this year than they usually do?

What happened last year that left you hurt or disappointed? What were you expecting instead?

Where might you be setting yourself up to take something personally that really isn't about you?

EXERCISE

THE EXPECTATION REALITY CHECK

List three expectations you're carrying into the holidays. Then get real about each one.

WHAT I'M PICTURING	WHAT'S ACTUALLY LIKELY	MY RESET
EXAMPLE The whole family on the couch watching movies	Teens in their rooms, on their phones, with friends	Look for one-on-one moments: a Target run, a late-night chat, whoever wants to hang out

02

PRACTICE TWO

KNOW YOUR OUTCOME

READING

Before you walk into any holiday gathering, ask yourself one question: What am I really here for?

Maybe your parents are getting older and you want to spend time with them while you can. If that's the outcome you want, you're going to need to be flexible. The relatives who think differently, vote differently, and live differently are going to be at that table too. You get to decide whether that keeps you from connecting with the person you came for.

A lot of people struggle with this right now. We've gotten so fixed in what we think is right that we don't want to sit down to dinner with people who see it differently. That's hard. And it's also worth asking: can I set my judgments aside long enough to be present, enjoy, and connect?

Here's the freeing part. When you know your bigger point, you stop getting hung up on how it's supposed to look. If my goal is to connect with my kids and make memories, that doesn't have to happen in one specific form. It can happen in a hundred forms. The car ride. The kitchen at midnight. The errand nobody wanted to run alone.

"Connection doesn't have to happen in one form. It can happen in a hundred."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do you most want to feel or experience this holiday season?

For each gathering on your calendar, why are you going? What's the real reason?

Is there a judgment you're carrying that could get in the way of the outcome you want?

If your outcome happened in a different form than you pictured, would you be able to recognize it?

EXERCISE

MY HOLIDAY OUTCOME

Finish this sentence for the season, and then for each big gathering.

This holiday season, what matters most to me is

_____

_____

and I'm open to it showing up in whatever form it comes.

GATHERING	MY REAL REASON FOR GOING	WHAT I'M WILLING TO LET GO OF

03

PRACTICE THREE

RELATIVES VS. FAMILY

READING

I talk about this with clients all the time, and it's one of the most freeing ideas I know.

RELATIVES

Relatives are the people you're connected to by blood. If you need a blood transfusion or an organ transplant, those are your people.

FAMILY

Family is the people you choose to share your life with.

For some of us, our relatives are also our family. For others, they're not. And if your relatives aren't healthy people, it's okay to create a family of your own: people you choose, who can actually give you what you're looking for.

Because if you keep going back to someone who doesn't have the ability to give you what you need, and you keep hoping this time will be different, you're setting yourself up for hurt and disappointment. Again.

This isn't about cutting anyone off. It's about being honest about who can meet you where, and putting your heart in the places it can be held.

Relatives are who you're related to. Family is who you choose.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Who in your life is a relative? Who is family? Who is both?

Is there someone you keep going back to, hoping they'll give you something they've never been able to give?

Who are the people who truly fill you up? How can you make room for them this season?

If you need to, how could you start building a chosen family?

EXERCISE

MY PEOPLE

Write the names that come to mind.

People who fill my cup:

People I love, but need to manage my expectations with:

One person I want to make real time for this season:

04

PRACTICE FOUR

FILL YOUR TANK

READING

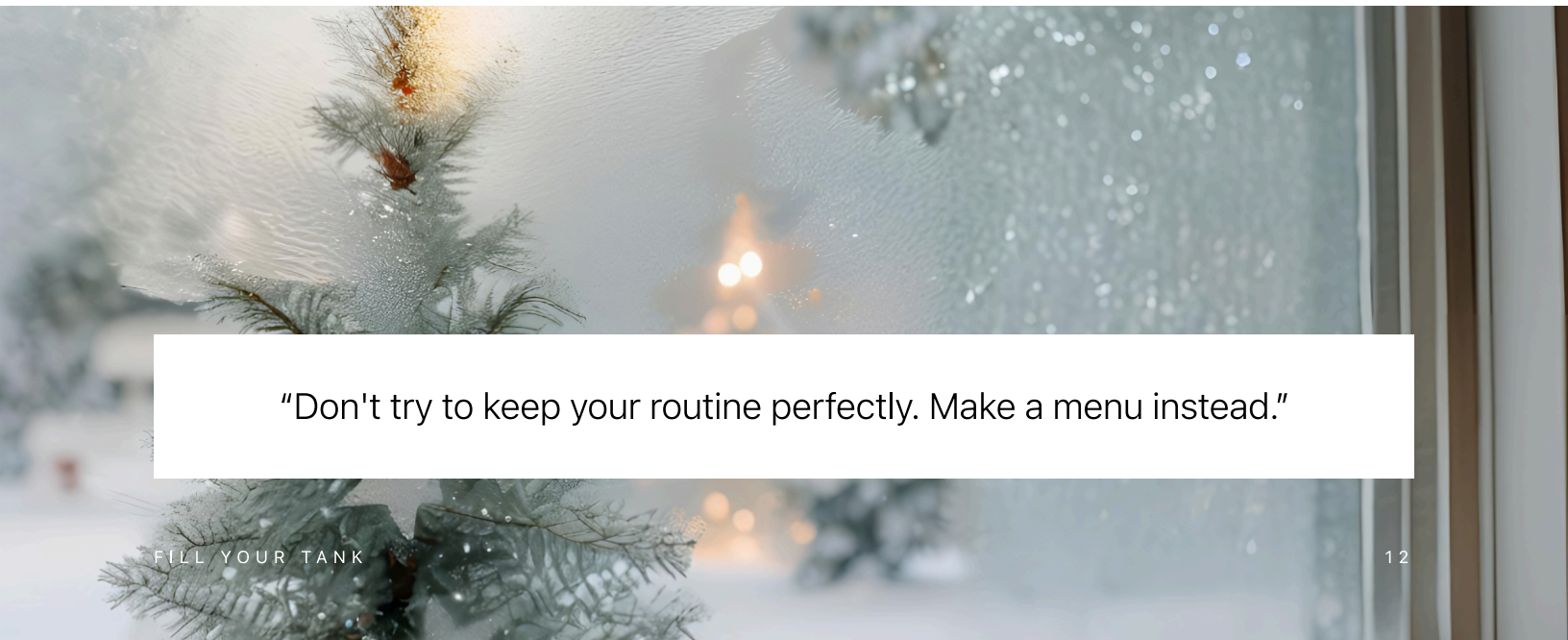
The second big holiday trap is overwhelm and depletion.

By this point in the year, most of the people I work with are already running on empty. They're high-achieving, hard-working people who have given a lot all year. And now we're adding travel, gifts, entertaining, parties, and family dynamics on top of it.

If you're not filling your cup leading up to the holidays, your ability to stay grounded is going to be a lot lower.

But here's the flip side. If you try to keep your normal routine perfectly through the holidays, that becomes one more source of stress. The answer isn't all or nothing. It's choosing what you can realistically do, given the time you actually have.

So instead of a rigid routine, make a menu.



"Don't try to keep your routine perfectly. Make a menu instead."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1 to 10, how full is your tank right now?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

EMPTY FULL

What usually drains you most during the holidays?

What are the things that genuinely bring you joy or help you feel like yourself?

What's realistic for you to do for yourself, given the time you'll actually have each day?

EXERCISE

MY SELF-CARE MENU

List everything that fills you up, from big to small. Then sort it by how much time it takes, so on any given day you can pick what fits.

5 MINUTES OR LESS

Coffee in the dark, in silence, before the day starts

A few deep breaths

15 TO 30 MINUTES

A walk outside

Meditation or prayer

AN HOUR OR MORE

A workout or class

Time with a friend who fills you up

PRACTICE FIVE

05 CHOOSE YOUR GROUNDING POINT

READING

Here's why filling your tank matters so much. Overwhelm makes us reactive.

And the holidays are full of things to react to. There will be traffic. Gifts will get lost. The airline will mess up. Someone will say something irritating or disappointing. When you're grounded, you can roll with it. When you're not, every little thing feels personal and huge.

That's why I want you to choose one grounding point. One thing from your menu you can do consistently, every day, no matter what the day brings.

For some people it's their workout. For someone else it's fifteen minutes of meditation. For me, it's drinking my coffee in the dark, in silence, before my day starts. It might be a walk, reading, prayer, or journaling. It doesn't matter what it is. It matters that it's yours and that you actually do it.

"When you're grounded, you can handle the plot twists."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When you've felt most steady in the past, what were you doing to take care of yourself?

What's one thing you could do every single day this season, even on your busiest days?

When during the day will you do it?

What's your backup plan for travel days or the days when everything goes sideways?

EXERCISE

MY GROUNDING POINT

My daily grounding point is:

I'll do it (when and where):

On hard or travel days, my mini version is:

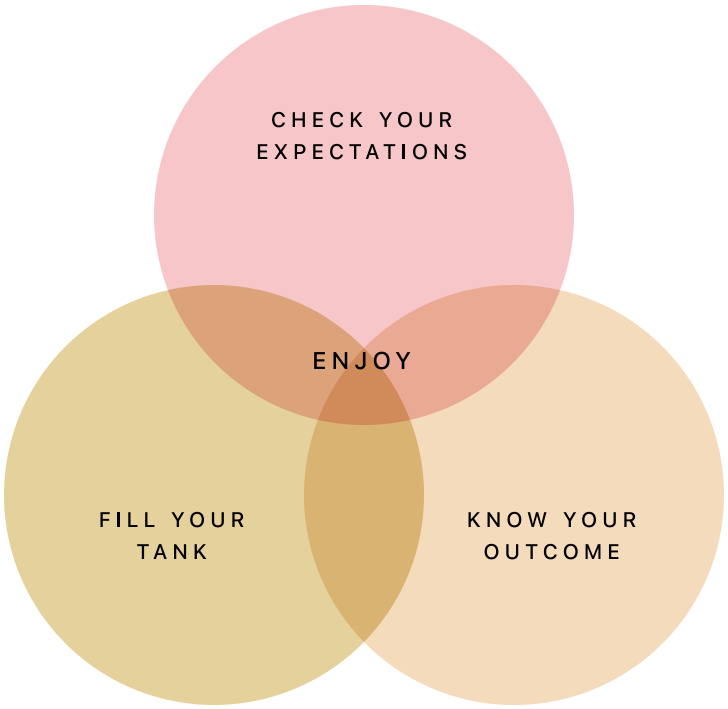
I'll know I need it more when I notice:



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

THE SIMPLE SYSTEM

Here's the whole thing in a nutshell.



Check your expectations so you don't get blindsided.

Keep your tank filled so you have the capacity to respond instead of react.

Stay focused on your outcome so you don't get stuck on what it's supposed to look like.

The combination of those helps you navigate the overwhelm, the plot twists, and the irritations, and still enjoy yourself.

KEEP CLOSE

THE PLOT TWIST RESET

For the moments when someone says the thing, the flight gets canceled, or you feel resentment creeping in.

CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE, OR SAVE IT TO YOUR PHONE.

WHEN IT GOES SIDEWAYS

THE PLOT TWIST RESET

1. **Pause.** Take one deep breath before you respond.
2. **Ask: Is this actually a surprise?** If you knew this person or situation might go this way, let that awareness soften the sting.
3. **Find the expectation.** What was I expecting just now that didn't happen?
4. **Remember your outcome.** What am I really here for? Does this change that?
5. **Come back to your grounding point.** If your tank is low, step away and do your mini version.

REALIZATION COACHING

PRINTABLE

DATE

DAILY HOLIDAY CHECK-IN

Use this each morning (or whenever you can grab five minutes) through the season.

Today, my grounding point is: ☐ DONE

An expectation I'm checking today:

What matters most to me today:

Who I want to connect with today:

One moment of joy or gratitude from yesterday:



SUPPORT THIS SEASON

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE

The holidays can be one of the most beautiful times of year. They can also be one of the most stressful. Most of us are somewhere in between.

If you want support this season, I'd love to help.

JOIN ME LIVE

HOLIDAY Q&A (FREE)

Tuesday, December 8 at 6:30 PM Eastern

Bring your holiday questions, your family situations, and whatever you're struggling with. We'll talk through it together.

SAVE MY SPOT

ONE-ON-ONE

BOOK A HOLIDAY TUNE-UP

$225 · single session

A single one-on-one session to get grounded before the holidays hit full speed.

BOOK MY TUNE-UP

COMING SOON

The New Year's Reflection Guide. When the holidays wind down, I'll send my New Year's Reflection Guide so you can look back, get clear on your why, and step into 2027 on purpose.

Wishing you a season with more joy, more connection, and a lot less of the ski lodge pressure.

Jenny