



Surviving the Holidays

The holiday season can bring both joy and challenges, especially for those healing from trauma. For many people, the holidays can be a really tough time. You go on social media and are bombarded with everyone's perfect pictures of having fun. It's easy to feel disconnected, lonely, or as though you're missing something.

Everyone is in a different place on their healing journey and may experience different emotions, or you may have some ups and downs. You may be struggling with painful memories or feel the pressure to be joyful when you really don't feel it inside.

No matter where you are on your journey, I want you to know you're not alone, and it's okay to feel however you feel. This guide is a gift to help you navigate the holidays and find comfort, practical tools, and meaningful ways to care for yourself this season.





Busting myths about holiday happiness

Myth 1: “Everyone else has a perfect holiday season.”

- **Truth:** Social media only shows the highlights. What we see online is often curated and doesn't reflect the full reality of people's lives. Many people struggle with loneliness, family conflicts, or emotional pain during the holidays too.
- **Actionable tip:** Practice media mindfulness. Limit your exposure to social media and unfollow accounts that trigger negative feelings. Instead follow accounts that make you feel supported and empowered.



Myth 2: “You should feel happy and cheerful just because it's the holidays.”

- **Truth:** Emotions don't follow a schedule, and it's okay if the holidays don't feel joyful. Healing is complex, and it's normal to experience a mix of emotions.
- **Actionable tip:** Give yourself permission to feel whatever comes up without judgment. It's okay to have moments of sadness, anger, or frustration. These emotions are valid.



Myth 3: “You need to be surrounded by others to feel loved.”

- **Truth:** Love comes in many forms, including self-love. Spending time with yourself can be healing, and it's okay to choose solitude when you need it.
- **Actionable tip:** Reframe loneliness. Being alone doesn't mean you're unloved. Take this time to nurture your inner self. Consider taking time to reflect on what self-love looks like for you. Know that love comes in many forms, including from you to you.





Practical tips to combat loneliness

Tip 1: Create new holiday traditions

New traditions can bring joy and a sense of control. They don't have to be big or expensive, small meaningful activities can make a difference.

Ideas:

- **Solo Movie Night:** Choose a film that feels comforting or meaningful to you, whether it's an old favourite or something new. Get cozy with blankets and snacks, and enjoy your night.
- **Reflection Jar:** Start a reflection jar, adding one thing you're grateful for every day.
- **Hobby:** Try a new hobby or revisit one that brings you peace (painting, journaling, dancing, etc.).
- **Cookies:** Try your hand at baking. Have some fun and bring out your childlike joy. Gingerbread cookies are a Christmas favourite, and they're easy to make, and you can enjoy decorating them!
- **Scrapbooking:** Create a scrapbook filled with meaningful moments, quotes, or images that inspire joy and healing.



Tip 2: Foster connection with supportive people

You don't need to be surrounded by a crowd to experience connection. We all know what it's like being in a room full of people yet still feeling so alone. It's about the quality of relationships, not the quantity.

- **Reach Out:** Reach out to a trusted friend or family member for a phone call or virtual chat. It can make a world of difference to share a laugh and connect.
- **Join Healing Communities:** Whether online or in-person, find spaces that support survivors, where you feel safe and heard.
- **Join a Group:** Think of an activity you enjoy and find a group near you. You'll be surprised by the new connections you can make.



Self-care and healing practices

Self-care tips for the holidays:

Tip 1 - Nurture yourself with comforting activities: Light candles, take a warm bath, get cozy with blankets, or sip herbal tea, these can all help create a sanctuary.

Tip 2 - Set boundaries with yourself and others: Give yourself permission to decline invitations or say no to things that drain you.

Tip 3 - Prioritise rest: Rest is not indulgence; it's essential for healing. Whether it's a 15-minute nap or a full night's sleep, allow your body to replenish itself.

Tip 4 - Reconnect and breathe: Set aside a few minutes each day for deep breathing or simple mindfulness practices. This can help calm your mind and release tension. Don't worry about doing it right or being perfect, just breathe.

Tip 5 - Fresh air: Take a walk in nature. Not only will the fresh air change how you feel, but you can also practice mindfulness, noticing every detail on your walk, the colour of the leaves, the crisp air on your skin, etc.



Time with yourself

Journaling and reflection prompts for the holidays:

Journaling can be a powerful tool for self-reflection, self-compassion, and healing. It helps you connect with your inner self and process your emotions during this season. Take your time with these prompts, and allow yourself the space to explore your thoughts and feelings without judgment.

- What are three things, big or small, that I'm grateful for right now?

- What is one new tradition or ritual I can create for myself this holiday season that honours my healing journey?

- What is something I can do for myself today that will make me happy?

- If I could give myself a gift this season, what would it be? How can I give myself that gift in a meaningful way?



Dating Myself

Plan a “self-date” for the next week. Don’t wait for someone else to take you out on a date, take yourself out on a date and spend time with yourself. Write below what you will do, where you will go, and when, and then schedule it in. This is a step that will show yourself love and care, a gift to yourself during the holidays.

The holiday season may come with challenges, but it’s also a time for you to take care of yourself and enjoy your time. It doesn’t have to be perfect, and it’s okay if your experience looks different from others. The most important thing is that you honour your needs and take it one step at a time.

You are worthy of love, peace, and happiness just as you are. This holiday season, take time for yourself, cherish small moments of joy, and honour your journey. You’re doing amazing, and you deserve all the care and kindness in the world. Do what’s right for you and enjoy the holidays in your own way.