

## Holiday Boundaries: We Can't Do It All and That's Okay

Every year, everyone is given an opportunity to sit back, relax, and enjoy the holidays with our friends and family. Holidays are the time of the year that can be felt by the warm, crisp breeze of leaves falling to the ground. The smell of wood burning and crackling in the toasty fireplace as we curl up to keep warm as the snow falls ever so graciously down from the sky, turning the world into a temporary snow globe.

However, even with as much joy as the holidays can bring us, they can also bring pressure and stress as well. If we don't take time to set healthy boundaries around our family and the expectations, we often find ourselves up against them it can be difficult to truly enjoy the holiday season.

How often do we hear people say, "get through the holidays and everything will eventually calm down" or "there's so much on my plate right now, just got to get through the holidays and into the new year and it'll all be fine". When did the holidays become something, we just have to get through now? Ultimately, people get burnt out with all the giving we are expected to do during the holidays; the giving of time, money and energy that goes into making the holidays happen. A burnt out you won't be able to truly enjoy what the holidays were originally supposed to bring to families every year; love, attention, relaxation and the true meaning of being with our family and spending time with one another. The holiday season is the best time to set strong boundaries because of how demanding this time of the year can be.

During this time, we feel the pressure to do it all. Juggle our family obligations plus juggle our finances to make sure we can meet the same financial level everyone else can meet when it comes to spending money during the holidays. Knowing how to approach setting boundaries with our families while still being a part of the fun can be hard to do but is necessary to maintaining our overall well-being and most of all our finances as well!



Here are some steps to help you in creating those boundaries around the holidays:

1. Define Your Priorities

When setting up boundaries we need to identify our priorities and figure out what we can do and what we can't do. What are the most meaningful parts of the holidays for you? Is it hanging with friends, spending time with family, or spending time with ourselves? Knowing our priorities will help us to understand and guide us in setting those boundaries and having them align with what is important to us.

2. Create a Budget

Finances can be stressful, so it's essential to establish financial boundaries. Create a holiday budget to avoid overspending, ensuring you can still pay bills. Determine a spending limit for the holidays and stick to your budget.

3. Remember Self-Care

With the craziness the holidays can bring, remember to also take care of you! Take time to read a book, take a bath, sit down and watch your favorite holidays movies or shows. Whatever you enjoy doing during the holidays, make sure you take time to do those things for yourself! Don't be afraid to put yourself first and take a moment to breathe and recharge.

4. Saying "No" Is Okay

It's okay to decline holiday invitations; you don't have to say "yes" to everything. Prioritize your time and energy on what matters most to you. Saying "no" is an important skill for setting boundaries. According to Dr. Shawn M. Burn, using calm, respectful language helps maintain clear boundaries without provoking conflict. Taking care of yourself allows you to enjoy the holiday season rather than just endure it.

**Lastly**

Remember, setting boundaries is all about preserving your own mental health and overall well-being. Having boundaries allows you to create a space for those important people in your life while alas not draining you or your resources. Sharon Martin, DSW, LCSW, a licensed Psychotherapist practicing in San Jose, California said it best *"The holidays aren't just about making other people happy; your needs and wants matter, too! And when you feel your best, you can fully engage in holiday activities and authentically connect with others the right way"*.

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