



December 2023 News and Notes

Managing Holiday Expectations, Great and Small

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The holidays of December are like no other, often fraught with emotion and memory. How best to navigate the season?

Begin by setting priorities

Given the many pressures, it makes sense to prioritize what is most significant for you and your loved ones in holiday celebrations. Whether it's spiritual, familial, recreational, or community-based, what observances matter most? What gatherings and traditions have the most resonance? At the end of the season, what will you hope to look back on?

Communicate your plans and expectations

Especially if coordinating with others, you'll need to communicate your expectations and priorities, and invite theirs. Being clear about arrangements, who does what and when, will minimize misunderstandings.

At the holidays, time-honored traditions are often the order of the day. However, circumstances change and what has been for years may no longer be feasible. If this is the case, include others in brainstorming satisfying alternatives. What compromises may be needed?



Practice self-care

- When making plans and commitments, consider the demands on your time and energy to avoid over-scheduling. Perhaps a quiet brunch is more appropriate than an elaborate dinner, or smaller gatherings rather than a large party.
- Maintain a healthy diet and make sure you and your family get adequate rest, young children especially
- If needed, create a budget and set limits. Share costs with others or offer homemade gifts. Many families adopt gift-giving guidelines to lessen demands.
- Be mindful of your emotional health and the wellbeing of others. This time of year is difficult for many. Some may approach the holidays with dread because of past associations. Others may be experiencing a sense sadness and loss for what was and is no longer present in their lives.

Despite our hopes and best efforts, many times circumstances fall short of expectations. Planning ahead and setting realistic goals will help lessen the disappointments. When they do occur, practicing self-compassion and flexibility will better enable you to enjoy the season.