

# 4 Tips for Practicing Wholeness during the Holidays

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The Mecca of Black Wellness



Remaining whole and healthy during the holidays can be difficult at times. If you will be in environments that remind you of a previous trauma, interact with someone who has caused you harm, are grieving the loss of a loved one, or adjusting to the declining health of a friend or family member, those events can contribute to a significant amount of distress and cause you to feel overwhelmed. While this list is not intended to cover all circumstances that you may face, it is intended to provide ideas and brief suggestions related to incorporating the practice of self-love and engaging in self-care during the holidays.

## 1. SET YOUR OWN EXPECTATIONS AND BE INTENTIONAL

Use what you know about yourself, family, friends, and personal circumstances to help you set your expectations for your holiday plans. Feeding thoughts related to how holidays are “supposed” to be spent, or what activities someone “should” do during the holidays may only enhance stress and discomfort. Once you set your own expectations, try to be intentional about engaging in plans and activities that meet your needs. Review the Holiday Activities, Coping and Wellness document to identify pleasurable activities that you can engage in to improve your mood during this holiday season.

## 2. ACTIVELY PRACTICE ACCEPTANCE

While the holidays can be a time of warmth and happiness when spending time with loved ones, we also know it may be a time of grief and sadness as we remember our loved ones who are no longer here to celebrate with us or may be ill and must celebrate with us in a different way. Engaging in activities that help you actively practice acceptance may be helpful. For example, practice welcoming what feelings you notice when they come up by: 1.) naming them, 2.) journaling about them, and/or 3.) reminding yourself to be compassionate with yourself when you feel them. When you practice acceptance, you are still sad, disappointed, nervous, or fearful in difficult situations, but you do not add to these tough feelings with resistance to what *is*. Actively practicing acceptance helps ease suffering in the moment, and may help decrease pain in difficult moments that you may face in the future.

## 3. SAFE WORDS AND OTHER STRATEGIES TO ANTICIPATE IN-THE-MOMENT CHANGES

If you have concerns related to your ability to navigate triggering and/or stressful family dynamics and environments, it may be helpful to identify a “safe word” you can communicate to someone you trust as a signal of your need to change plans or remove yourself from a situation. Identifying your safe word and developing a plan in advance with someone who can support you may help alleviate some of your stress.

## 4. PRACTICE EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Many people find the holidays to be a time of increased obligations, and unfortunately increased stress. Therefore, the holidays may be a great time to try strategies that help you express gratitude for the things that are positive and going well. Try identifying at least one meaningful thing, person, or experience you are thankful for daily. Sharing what you are grateful for to someone who you speak with daily may be a good way to hold yourself accountable. In addition, journaling may be a helpful way to document all of your “thankful thoughts,” and will allow you to revisit them if you need to do so in the future.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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