

Maintain Don't Gain: Giving Yourself Permission To Say "No"

The holidays are meant to be filled with meaningful connections, gratitude and joy. In our excitement to make the holidays special for others, we often find our schedules overloaded with hosting parties and houseguests, following inherited traditions, volunteering for committees and shopping for just the right gifts and decorations. Recognizing the wisdom of saying "no" can reduce anxiety and lead to a brighter, happier, healthier holiday season.

- Reflect on what you cherish most about the holidays.**
Our time and resources are limited. Taking time to consider our own needs and priorities makes it easier to say "yes" to what really matters. This allows us to focus our attention and love on those things that give us the most joy.
- Block off time on your calendar for the activities and people that mean the most to you.**
The busier we get, the harder it is to say "no". Blocking off time for those people and activities that give us the greatest pleasure allows us to honestly evaluate whether we can honor other requests for our time. When new invitations come up that you really don't have time for you can honestly say, "I already have something on my calendar".
- Practice the art of saying "no".**
Saying "no" does not have to include creative excuses or apologies. Having a few short thoughtful explanations can make saying "no" easier. In saying "no" to a party, let the person know you appreciate being invited, that you will not be able to attend, but you value their friendship and would look forward to spending time with them after the holidays.
- Evaluate inherited traditions.**
If a tradition no longer brings the joy it once did perhaps it is time to re-evaluate. Feeling obligated to do the same activities or make the same meals year after year can be stressful and often expensive. Choose a few traditions to hold on to and challenge family and friends to come up with new creative ideas.
- Replace material gifts with memorable experiences.**
Part of developing new traditions might be replacing traditional gift giving with shared experiences that will form lasting memories for to come. Don't agonize over choosing the perfect experience-your time is what matters. Be present, not perfect.

