

Handling the Holidays

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The holidays can be an emotionally charged time of year. They represent many things to many people: joy, hope, thankfulness, nostalgia, obligations, expectations, memories of past losses and dreams for the future.

The TV version is usually portrayed in an “ideal” setting with the “perfect” family. In reality; however, the holidays are usually filled with increased tension and stress. This stress can reach overwhelming proportions for people who are dealing with cancer, chronic illness and/or depression.

It is important to realize your limitations at this time. If you do not feel like celebrating, allow yourself to pass on the holiday festivities. Don't let yourself be pushed into being cheerful or to take on too much by well-meaning relatives and friends. Give yourself permission NOT to celebrate, if that is how you truly feel, but be careful not to isolate yourself!

Start by reevaluating your priorities. Decide what is truly meaningful and important to you at this time and what can wait. It is important to communicate your needs to those around you so they are not left guessing what to do.

If you feel like celebrating the holidays, but find that you do not have the energy to do what you used to do, enlist the help of others. Ask your family and friends for help. People like to be useful. Be specific with your requests so people will know exactly what you need from them. They will most likely be more willing to help if your requests are clearly stated.

Gift shopping can be a tedious job and deplete a lot of energy for people already dealing with treatment-related fatigue or depression. Online shopping is an easy and convenient way to do your own shopping while avoiding stores, crowds and traffic. Consider asking a friend or a neighbor to pick up a few items or some groceries for you while they are out.

If you would like to get together with people for meals, but know you cannot do everything yourself, have a “potluck” holiday and ask everyone to bring a dish. They will understand. Or, ask someone else to host the meal this year. Do something different if you are used to “having company over” and eat out this year. You might also consider catering.

Writing short notes, sending an email or text message, or calling people is a great way to let people know that you are thinking about them while conserving precious energy and time when you are not feeling well.

Set limits for yourself with others. Don't overdo in an attempt to meet with “tradition” or people-please. There are plenty of thoughtful, thankful and meaningful ways to celebrate the holidays. Just being alive is one of them! You do not have to go overboard with holiday tradition to celebrate. This year is as good as any to make some changes. Allow for a meaningful expression of what the holidays hold for you. Allow for some quiet time, and be true to yourself! Remember: The process of giving is without limits!

I invite you to like/follow A Place To Heal Counseling, LLC on Facebook! Happy Holiday!