

# The Present of Presence: Mindfulness in the Holidays



The holidays can be a time of joy, family, spiritual renewal and gratitude. Too often, these things get lost in the hustle and bustle of the season. We have increased demands for our time and attention: kids home from school, shopping, family and social gatherings. While these things can be wonderful, they also can add to our stress. This year, it may be helpful to consider doing the things that nurture you and maybe choosing to not do things just because you are supposed to do

them. Here are some tips for helping you and your family be present to the season and enjoy the holidays.

- 1. Be Selective** Think about which activities you and your family really want to do this year. What family events do you want to attend? What don't you want to attend? Are there people that you can see at a different time of year that might create less stress and make the visit more enjoyable? Consider all your demands. Put them on a whole-month calendar. Write in what you will be expected to do for each event, for example, cooking, shopping, or wrapping. Consider all the demands that each event will include and make decisions about what you are and are not able to do. It may help to have a family meeting to discuss this so that everyone can agree or at least be prepared for what you will and won't be doing.
- 2. Consider cutting back** Consider what can you do to make your and your family's life easier. Can you decide as a group to not buy gifts for all the extended family members? Think about having a name drawing for the adults, just buying for kids or having the kids do a gift exchange. What about in your own household? As a family, you could decide to cut back with gift giving. It may be helpful to redirect that energy to giving back to the community by buying gifts for a needy family, serving a meal at a shelter, or giving of your time to assist with donations at a local charity. There are so many ways to make things simpler for your family and revel in the spirit of the holidays.
- 3. Plan Ahead** It is easy to get caught up in the every day rat race of the holidays. Plan time for yourself and your family to have down time: find a good book, watch a holiday movie together, or have a game night. It is important to find the time that allows you to be together in ways that are nurturing. With everyone's busy schedules, it is essential to plan.
- 4. Be Mindful** Find ways for you and your family to contemplate what the season means to you on a daily basis. For many people, it is a time of spiritual renewal. Whether you are faith-based or not, looking for meaning in the season can be helpful. Be aware of consciously being kind or patient with others. Live with an intention of finding peace, joy and gratitude in your daily life.

The holidays can be very busy and full. They also offer us an opportunity to make choices about what we want to get out of the season. "The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it," *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* Give a gift to yourself and choose to be thoughtful about how you want to spend your holidays.