



NGPS Division Social Worker's Light Hearted Holiday Survival Guide

With the Christmas season upon us, traditional images of the holidays appear impeccable and dreamlike. Cozy, cheerful, tastefully decorated homes, surrounded by white, pristine snow, with happy, well-dressed families gathered around a table sharing a large dinner cooked to Instagram perfection are simply unrealistic.

Life can be so complex and messy that it's impossible to guarantee a picture perfect Christmas. And yet, every year, we still yearn for it. A lot of hard work goes into planning, baking, decorating, expecting a fun, relaxing Christmas holiday, often ending up hectic and stressful. For some of us, we would rather stay under the covers until spring!

MY GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

(Disclaimer wink wink: This guide is not intended to replace professional therapy or medication. However, it may help you laugh through the chaos!)

Essential Items

1. **A Strong Cup of Coffee (or Tea):** Your daily dose of sanity in liquid form.
2. **Ear Plugs:** Because sometimes, "Silent Night" becomes a screaming match.
3. **A Sense of Humor:** Your superpower against sugar-fueled tantrums and endless demands of "Are we there yet?"
4. **A Planned Escape:** For when the kids are finally asleep and you need some "me" time: a walk in the snow, Netflix that is not cartoons, phone call to the friend that can make you laugh.
5. **A First Aid Kit:** For minor injuries, like paper cuts from wrapping presents and emotional wounds from family gatherings.

Survival Tips

1. **Embrace the Chaos:** Don't fight it. Just enjoy the ride (or at least pretend to).
2. **Lower Your Expectations:** Remember, perfection is overrated. An overcooked turkey or an off-key rendition of "Jingle Bells" can still create lasting memories.
3. **Delegate:** Don't be afraid to enlist the help of your spouse, kids, or the family pet.
4. **Practice Mindfulness:** Take deep breaths and count to ten (or twenty or thirty). Remember, this too shall pass.

5. **Find Your Happy Place:** Whether it's a hot shower, a good book, a flight to Mexico or a quiet moment alone with a chocolate bar, make time for yourself.

Emergency Procedures:

- **Sugar Rush:** Offer healthy snacks, like fruits and vegetables (or bribe them with more candy, whatever works).
- **Sibling Rivalry:** Separate them or let them fight it out (just kidding, don't do that).
- **Meltdown:** Offer a hug, a cold drink or a distraction (like a shiny object or a pet).
- **Adult Drama:** Politely excuse yourself and retreat to a quiet room until January.

Remember, the goal is to survive, not thrive. Lean into the disorder and mess, it will be over all too soon!

This article was written by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. She is the Division Social Worker for Northern Gateway Public Schools and is a support and advocate for students and families to promote wellness and success in school. Tammy has been a Registered Social Worker for more than 25 years and is a mother to 4 children; 1 in high school and 3 in university.