



NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS

WORKSHEET

Navigating the holiday season can be challenging for some victim-survivors. This time of year can bring up a lot of sadness, grief, and stress that can make enjoying the holiday season difficult.

REMINDERS

- You are valid in saying, “No” to attending family/holiday gatherings. You don’t owe an explanation if you don’t wish to give one.
- You are valid in saying, you have other plans. It doesn’t matter if it’s true or not, you are allowed to make other plans.
- Your physical responses and feeling unwell is valid. Our bodies react to the stress that we are feeling and it is perfectly okay to allow your body to rest.
- You are valid in leaving early. For however long you stayed that is enough.
- You are valid in requesting to meet with family members separately. You’re allowed to choose which family members you want to spend time with.
- You are valid in enforcing social distancing or requesting to meet virtually.

SIGNS YOUR ENVIRONMENT MAY BE TOXIC OR UNSAFE

- You feel angry, anxious, sad, or depressed.
- You feel drained, extra tired, numb, or empty.
- You feel forced or obligated to be in that environment.
- You feel like you have to take care of others.
- You feel like you can’t be yourself.
- You are constantly criticized and you’re not allowed to express your emotions.
- You have experienced abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual).
- People are opinionated, rigid in their thinking, suspicious, or enjoy conflict at the expense of others.
- People act out with unjustified irritation or anger if feeling left out of anything.
- People collect past injustices, mistakes, or problems (or a past “score-card”) to resurrect to argue with you or others.
- People are not respecting your request to observe social distancing or wearing masks.

BOUNDARIES

- Boundaries can help you define what you are comfortable with and how you would like to be treated by others. Here are some questions to consider:
 - How much time with your family is okay?
 - What activates a stress response or causes discomfort?
 - Are there certain relatives you simply cannot tolerate?
 - Do you want to meet virtually?
 - If you are meeting in person, what health precautions do you want to engage in?
 - Are there others you can handle in group settings but not one-on-one?
- Implementing boundaries can be challenging for those who have experienced trauma and it is normal to feel fear or anxiety about them. It is important to remember how people act and behave is a reflection of who they are and has nothing to do with you. You deserve to feel safe.

SHARING YOUR BOUNDARIES

- The following may be helpful:
 - Spend some time exploring your boundaries by yourself or by talking it out with a trusted person.
 - Form alliances with those you like and if possible, talk to them about your boundaries.
 - Think about what you will do or say if people don't respect your boundaries.
 - Practice stating boundaries:
 - I feel _____
 - When you/I _____
 - Because _____
 - I need/deserve _____
 - Boundary _____

Examples

- I feel uncomfortable and sad when you make comments about my weight because they are hurtful. I deserve to be respected and if you continue to make comments like that I am going leave.
- When we have discussions about this topic, I get overwhelmed. If you continue to make personal attacks at me, I will walk away from this conversation.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- In order to prepare yourself to navigate the holidays, it may be helpful to identify what dynamics usually occur and prepare for those. Things to keep in mind:
 - It is unlikely for people who are harmful to suddenly change. If they have been harmful in the past it may be safest to plan on it happening again.
 - Don't try to control others. You are only in control of you.
 - Other people's comfort is not more important than your safety and well-being.
 - If things get out of hand and you can safely leave, it is okay to do so. You are not ruining anything, you are prioritizing your safety and well-being.

- Violence can escalate quickly, even when we don't expect it. If alcohol, drugs, or weapons become involved, that is a good sign that the environment is no longer safe. A Care Advocate can support you to create an exit plan.
- Addressing deep-rooted family issues during the holidays can be overwhelming and dangerous. If you are interested in bringing these concerns up—it may be helpful to do so with the guidance of a trained counselor.

INVESTING VERSUS DIVESTING

- One way to navigate the season is to focus on investing versus divesting. Rather than focusing on who you're going to avoid or what you can't or won't participate in, you may want to invest in things that make you feel good or safe. Invest your time and energy into:
 - Keeping busy—help in the kitchen, play with children or pets, help with cleaning chores, play a game/watch videos on your phone. Distractions can be helpful.
 - People that respect you and your boundaries—plan a holiday gathering with friends or connect with others who can resonate and validate your experience.
 - Nature – go for a walk if you have to, or limit contact for a while if people insist on violating your boundaries.
 - Personal projects – you can utilize the holiday season to clean your space, self-reflections, and work on your new year intentions.
- Whatever it is, re-creating the season to fit your needs may make it a bit more bearable.

HOLIDAY SELF-CARE PLAN

- Sometimes we can't control the things happening around us but we can create a holiday self-care plan so we can emotionally survive those experiences. Being aware of your spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical health can help you navigate the holiday season.
 - What do you need for your:
 - Emotional health _____
 - Psychological health _____
 - Physical health _____
 - Spiritual health _____
 - When you are in a crisis:
 - Who can you talk to _____
 - What can you do to self-soothe _____
 - Where can you go that's safe _____

RESOURCES

- **UNLV Community**

- Care Advocates
 - Visit unlv.edu/carecenter to schedule an appointment
 - Call 702-895-0602 for immediate assistance
- UNLV CAPS (Student Counseling and Psychological Services)
 - Call 702-895-3627

- **Las Vegas Community**

- Signs of Hope
 - Call 702-366-1640 (24/7 Hotline)
- SafeNest
 - Call or text 702-646-4981 (24/7 Hotline)