Healthier boundaries for happier holidays

6 tips to avoid becoming a "Grinch"

For some, the holidays are the happiest time of the year. For others, they're stressful. While holiday stress is common, creating healthy boundaries helps you enjoy them more. Here's how.

Manage your time commitments. Decide what amount of activity feels best to maintain your energy and mental health. Then make the decision that feels most authentic, and commit to it.

Set financial boundaries. Creating a budget can help alleviate stress when it comes to big expenses like gift giving and holiday meals. Consider the following questions when establishing your budget:

- Who are you buying for? Can you allocate a certain amount per person?
- Are there opportunities to host a group gift exchange with a spending cap?
- Is there a dollar amount per paycheck that you can afford to save?

Communicate clearly and honestly. Use language with the words "I feel" or "I decided" to clarify your boundaries. Whether it's about financial restraints or the amount of time to spend, empower yourself to be open and clear.

Drink alcohol responsibly. Alcohol can add stress, and cause us to abandon boundaries if abused. Paying attention to the number of drinks you consume can help you be mindful.

If you or a loved one are struggling with addiction, please contact the nationwide hotline for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services at 800-662-HELP (4357)

When you disagree, do it in a healthy way. If your family is not accustomed to boundaries, try to stay calm and respectful. Listen to the other person's side, then work toward a solution. If the other person is not being respectful, leave the conversation, and pick it up another time.

Get professional help. Unfortunately, stress is often connected with the holidays. Talking to a friend or family member may help, but you also may want to see a counselor. They can help you manage your stress, resulting in healthier celebrations.

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