



Setting healthy boundaries for the holidays

Between holiday invitations and expectations and navigating family and friend dynamics, stress can quickly take over. Setting healthy boundaries can help you protect your time, energy, and mental health so you can enjoy the season.

Here are six practical tips:

- 1. Manage your time commitments.** Decide what feels realistic for you and your family. You can choose which family or social events you'll attend based on your capacity—not pressure, and let your friends and relatives know you'll visit for a few hours instead of staying all day.
- 2. Set a budget.** Overspending on gifts or hosting can add unnecessary stress. Agree on a spending limit for family gifts, or suggest a group gift exchange with a price cap. Talk with family about limiting the number of presents for kids.
- 3. Communicate clearly and honestly.** Be upfront about your boundaries. Use phrases like "I feel" or "I've decided" to explain your choices. "I've decided to keep our gift budget small this year," or "I feel best leaving by 8 p.m. so we can recharge."
- 4. Handle disagreements respectfully.** Handle disagreements respectfully. Not everyone will understand your boundaries, and that's okay. Stay calm and listen before responding. If a conversation becomes disrespectful, step away and revisit it later—if at all.
- 5. Create space for your needs.** Sometimes boundaries mean choosing comfort over tradition. Stay in a hotel instead of at a relative's house for privacy. Bring your own food if you have dietary restrictions, and give yourself permission to skip an event if you need rest.
- 6. Get professional support if needed.** If holiday stress feels overwhelming, talking to a counselor can help you manage your emotions. Boundaries protect your well-being. When you take care of yourself, you can show up best for the people you love.



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