

Holiday Power ~ Take Charge Of Emotional Safety During The Holidays

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Here are a few ideas for taking charge of the emotional and physical safety of yourself and your loved ones this holiday season.

1. **Be realistic.** What are some things that have gone wrong during past holidays that are likely to happen again unless you do something differently? What changes can you make so that things will go as well as possible?

2. **Plan to do less.** A huge cause of stress comes from trying to do too much. Nice gifts and special food can be fun when they are within your budget of time and money. The problem is that too often gifts and food become symbols of love – and because we want to be loving, we spend more time and money than we can easily afford.

Remember that the most simple gifts and the most simple food, shared with love, can be the most meaningful.

3. **Don't try to please everybody.** The people who want to be pleased with you will be pleased no matter what you do, as long as you treat them with care and respect. The people who want to criticize you will criticize no matter what you do, even if you almost kill yourself trying to make them happy.

4. **Be careful.** Accidents often happen in the holidays because people are in too much of a hurry or get distracted. Drive safely. Keep supervising your children. Stay aware.

Vietnamese Buddhist monk, philosopher and author Thich Naht Han suggests using the time while you are waiting for red lights as a chance to enjoy breathing slowly and deeply with full focus.

5. **Stay in charge of yourself.** Be aware of your emotional triggers and decide to practice managing them. Remember that you might not be able to control what the difficult people in your life say or do, but

you can control your response.

Instead of getting triggered, you can change the subject, set boundaries, or leave the room. If you set boundaries, be prepared to deal with negative responses at first, and have a plan for how to persist.

6. **Be prepared to help children set and respect boundaries.** Families and friends getting together can so exciting that people forget to respect personal boundaries. Remind children that touch for affection and games should be the choice of **both** people, safe, and allowed by the adults in charge.

Support children in saying "No" if they don't want to be hugged, to be kissed, to roughhouse, or to play a game -- and in respecting the "No" of other people. Remind children to tell you about problems. Take the time to listen to them when they do.

7. **Teach children that they can be happy without always getting what they want.** Sometimes children believe that they want something desperately and adults will make themselves frantic trying to give it to them. Instead, show children how they can enjoy something without possessing it. If a child is disappointed about not getting a specific toy, give the child the space to be disappointed and then suggest doing something fun together.

Remember that the biggest gifts that adults can give children don't come in packages. Your job is not to give the children in your life what they want, but to give them what they truly need.

8. **Get involved in your community** – through supporting good causes, connecting with organizations, and through your religious or spiritual community. Doing something to help someone else is one of the best ways to feel good about yourself.

9. **Remember that you don't have to be perfect to be great.** If things don't go as well as you hope, be nice to yourself. Do your best. Learn from your mistakes. Try to keep your sense of perspective.

10. **Last but not least, have fun.** Take the time to stop and look around at our beautiful world. Enjoy the faces and voices of your loved ones. Laugh. Love. And be happy.