

Here Come the Holidays

Tell Yourself a Different Story This Year

Change the expectations that may be adding pressure to your season.



The holidays can come with a lot of expectations about how things should look and how we should feel. Sometimes, the pressure we experience isn't just about what's happening around us. It's also about the story we're telling ourselves about what the holidays are supposed to be. **Notice when an expectation is making things harder and consider another way to look at it:**

Instead of... "I have to make the holidays special for everyone."

Try... **"I can focus on what matters most and let others help, too."** Don't carry the responsibility for everyone else's experience. Share the work, simplify where you can and decide what deserves your energy.

Instead of... "I should be happier this time of year."

Try... **"Whatever I'm feeling is OK."** The holidays can bring joy, stress, grief, loneliness or many emotions at once. Give yourself permission to experience the season as it is, rather than how you think it should feel.

Instead of... "We have to do it the way we always have."

Try... **"Traditions can change and still be meaningful."** Keep what brings connection or joy, adjust what no longer works and let go of what has become more stressful than meaningful.

Instead of... "If I say no, I'm letting someone down."

Try... **"Saying no can help make room for what matters most."** Protect your time and energy by setting boundaries when you need them.

Instead of... "Everyone else seems to be enjoying the holidays more than I am."

Try... **"I don't have to compare my holiday to anyone else's."** Other people's experiences may look different from yours. Focus on what feels meaningful and manageable for you.

Rewrite your holiday story. Pay attention to the "shoulds," "have tos" and "supposed tos" that show up this season. When they create unnecessary pressure, pause and ask yourself: Is there a kinder, more realistic way to look at this? A different perspective may not change everything happening around you, but it can change how you move through it.

Need help changing the story? The EAP is here to help you find a more manageable way forward.