



Coping With The Holidays OnePage

The winter holiday season can be stressful for anyone. **Expectations are high.** Crowds are everywhere. There are so many events to coordinate and attend. For a time of year that is supposed to be joyful, it can actually be very nerve-wracking. For survivors of abuse, there are many other layers of challenge that can make the holidays a **minefield of triggers and emotional pain.**

While we may have heard of loving, healthy families celebrating holidays together in a joyous fashion - this is not always the case for survivors of abuse. For some survivors the holidays of their childhood were filled with chaos and abuse. People fought frequently, yelling and cursing was prevalent, fists were raised and the kind of holiday spirit around their house was liquor rather than joy. Others lived in homes where it was expected that happy smiles be plastered on everyone's faces while everyone pretended to have the perfect holiday season. **Others never experienced a holiday season until they were adults on their own, away from their families.**

As survivors who may still be in touch with our families of origin for many reasons - now our holidays may represent ugly memories, a duty to be around family members who are unkind to us or possibly was one of our abusers, and the need to "play along" with requirements that you remain silent and not bring up "those old stories" about your abuse.

Others of us have been ostracized by our families because we did not remain silent about our abuse. For us, the holidays mean loneliness and heartache. If we have children we might be trying to focus on their having a happy holiday season while stuffing down our own painful feelings and memories.

We are here to support you and help make this holiday season a less painful - and even a comforting one.

To Cope with Holiday Stress and Emotional Pain Use These Strategies:

- Practice Healthy Boundaries (refer to the Healthy Boundaries OnePage for help)
- Limit your contact with toxic family members (see Family Relationships OnePage for help)
- Skip family events if attending them would cause you emotional harm. If you go take a safe, support person and limit the amount of time that you'll be there.
- Shift your focus during the holidays to something not affected by bad memories/experiences: celebrate with FRAMILY instead of family, serve at a local shelter, volunteer with Toys 4 Tots, try new traditions inspired by Christmas in other countries
If you have children, enlist help from others to create a happy holiday season
- Make a commitment to yourself NOT to stuff painful or difficult feelings this holiday season, practice safe, constructive ways to express them such as writing or art therapy
- Build GENEROUS of self-care time into your holiday schedule

** Supercharge Your Recovery:*

*** As adults, we can now choose to break the abuse cycle - we now have the choice to celebrate in ways that are healthy and loving. We support you to make this choice today and let us know how you are doing. Reach out to us anytime!**

This OnePage is a downloadable resource provided by Athena Moberg and Bobbi Parish of The #NoMoreShame Project and is protected by 2014 Copyright Laws. Unauthorized reproduction is strictly prohibited. This resource has been made available in conjunction with Athena and Bobbi's Weekly Google Hangouts on Air, which may now be found on YouTube.

