

Village Cooperative of Greeley

DECEMBER FEATURE



de-stress your Holidays

Unexpected ideas, as well as the tried-and-true, give us reasons to smile during the holiday season.

Are you one of those people who shudder involuntarily when you think about the holidays, wishing that you could embrace the joy of the season instead? Many older Americans, especially those entertaining or providing care to others, contemplate the extra demands on their limited time and wonder how they will fit in another thing when they are already juggling family, work, volunteer activities and a social life. Older adults may dread reminders of loved ones who are no longer here, the difficulty of going nonstop on family holiday outings, or trying to afford presents on a fixed income.

It doesn't have to be that way. Stress is often the result of unrealistic expectations that you can manage. Take a mental look at which specific issues cause you worry around the holidays, and write them down. Then peruse this comprehensive list of ideas for getting those issues under control, and jot down an action plan. We've included solutions to overcome

worries that often crop up at this time of year. Just having a plan will make you feel better, but acting on it will put you back in control and on your way to a joyous holiday season.

Give yourself permission to change your holiday routine

Just because you usually decorate a full-size fir with three boxes of ornaments, cook a complete holiday meal for 18 with all the fixings, and wrap every present for 47 extended family members doesn't mean that you can't let it all go. Maybe your tree will be two feet tall this year: still lovely, but decked out in a quarter of the time. Perhaps you'll cook the main dish and go potluck for the rest of the meal. Amazon.com may supply your presents. Pick and choose what truly gives you joy, and what you can reasonably accomplish.

Simplify meals

If you love making your grandmother's favorite recipe but feel stressed at the

thought of cooking the entire dinner, you have options. Potluck is the new normal at family gatherings, even if faraway relatives need to cook at your place or have something shipped in. Do you really need five side dishes and three desserts? If so, make some of them ahead and stick them in the freezer. Use sturdy Chinet® paper plates with faux silver (plastic) utensils, and reserve the family china for serving pieces to cut down on clean-up.

Don't do it all alone

When the young adults in your life whine that you didn't get a tree this year, dimly smile and tell them how proud you are they are old enough to decorate one all by themselves if they'd like to get one. Hubby wants a full four-course meal? Remind him about the restaurant that is serving holiday meals and suggest a reservation. Or, let him know his barbeque skills would come in handy this year and you'll coach him on dessert. Communicate your needs early, and let everyone know their help is

appreciated. Include older adults in your planning, with tasks that are appropriate to their ability. Mom may not be able to whip up her peach cobbler anymore, but if she stirs the crumble and pats the peaches into place, she'll feel useful. Leave a few ornaments at eye level for her to put on the tree, or have her tie the ribbon on a gift or two.

Take time for yourself

Set aside half an hour a day to rejuvenate. Whether it's taking a hot bath, sipping cocoa while reading a book, or lighting a candle and meditating, you need some "me" time. Prioritize it just like you would for a family member. In the long run, it will help you to do a better job as you give care or entertain over the holidays.

Anticipate hot-button issues and work around them

Does Aunt Helen thrive on denigrating the political party that you support? Does your sister who lives out-of-state let you know that your caregiving is not up to par? You can take evasive action. Sit at the opposite end of the table, excuse yourself from the table, politely refuse to engage in certain conversations, start the dishes or take a long walk. Have an exit strategy planned, and act on it.

Focus on the positive

Fear, sadness and worry can invade your thoughts during the holidays. This is perfectly normal. But you can control many of your thoughts with mindful awareness. Focus on what your loved ones can do, rather than what they can't. Delight in the activities you'll do this year, rather than those you can't participate in. Appreciate the smallest bit of help you receive, instead of resenting others who are not supportive.

Remember to exercise

Whether you take a long walk outside, do jumping jacks while the cookies are baking or attend a Pilates session, exercise can boost your mood. Enjoy making the rounds at your local mall or outdoor venue, where holiday decorations can add to a festive mood.

End the gift machine already

A lot of holiday stress centers around gift giving; what to buy and how to pay for it. Older adults on a fixed income have every right to opt out of the process. Or, you might limit gifts to one per person with a low price cap. You could also give the gift of time, especially welcome to those in need, without the expectation of a monetary gift in return. Expect to receive pushback from other family members, but keep in mind that you are in control of what you give.

Give to charity instead of individuals

Pick a charity as a family that everyone can donate to according to their resources. The benefits are many. The charity gets a nice chunk of change, no one is obligated to spend more than what is affordable, there is no awkward display of wealth or lack thereof since no one knows how much anyone else gave, and you can all feel a little better for supporting a common cause. If funds aren't an issue, or family members prefer to support different institutions, then individuals can champion a personal favorite.

Use a support system

Whether it's calling an old friend, getting together with your sister, or having a private laugh with a loved one in the kitchen, use your connections. That private laugh may turn into a long cry, but you need someone to share with who will be supportive. Counselors and therapists can be vital allies to keep your mental health strong when it may be tested most. Don't be afraid to reach out, especially at this time of year.

Start a new tradition

Instead of focusing on what you're not doing, make a new tradition. You could invite the neighbors over for dinner, watch a holiday movie together or take your loved ones on a drive to see the lights. Money isn't the object; instead, spend time together. Enjoy some holiday music, light a holly berry candle or read a holiday book aloud to a parent or grandchildren. Have a long FaceTime or Skype chat with

those you care about who live a distance away.

Take time to listen

It's easy to skip over loved ones' needs during this busy time of year. Depression and melancholy may make them quiet and easy to ignore with all the hustle and bustle, but they may need you more than ever. Ask them about childhood holidays, and don't end the conversation if they get sad or angry. Your empathy is vital.

Thank loved ones for what they've done for you

Take advantage of the holiday opportunity to thank your special friends and loved ones for teaching you how to cook, how to forgive or how to love. Tell them what a difference it's made in your life. Acknowledge the sacrifices that person made for you. Look for ways to be grateful. A side benefit of gratitude is that it makes you happier.

Connect with children

A local school holiday concert, an outing to the mall or a trip to story time at the library can lift our spirits. If you have grandchildren in the area, attend the child's choir concert or holiday production.

Do not set a goal of perfection

So the turkey is dry. You'll never forget the holiday you had to eat peanut butter sandwiches—but it will be a wonderful memory if everyone can laugh and talk about another the dinner that didn't go as planned. Approach "disasters" as opportunities to forgive (even if it's yourself), laugh, and be grateful for what you have, and this really will be your best holiday ever. ▀



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

events & happenings

Holiday Open House

Thursday, December 13th 🕒 1-3 p.m.

7251 W 20th St., Bldg J,
Greeley, CO 80232

Delicious food and festive drinks will be served!

Member Breakfast (Hosted by the Village Coop Social Club)

Saturday, Jan. 5th 🕒 9 a.m.

Homewood Suites
2510 46th Ave., Greeley, CO

Buffet breakfast available at the hotel (\$7 per person)

First Day of
Hanukkah
Monday 12/3

Pearl Harbor
Remembrance Day
Friday 12/7

Christmas Day
Tuesday 12/25

Kwanzaa Starts
Wednesday 12/26

New Year's Eve
Monday 12/31

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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Quote of the Month

The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our blessings and seek out ways to make life better for those around us. ~ Terri Marshall



OF GREELEY

Bevia Byrne
SALES MANAGER

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Village Cooperative is a community of active adults, so stay active with us—online! We'll keep you informed about upcoming events as well as share photos from past ones!



Village Cooperative **today**

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