



CCDP

HOLIDAY GROUP

This workbook can be used to provide tools to help you manage your symptoms through the holiday season.

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## SECTION 1: PACING

During the holidays or any other stressful time in our lives, it can be difficult to stick with routines and habits. In order to get a lot of tasks done in a short amount of time, your physical and emotional health may suffer.

In this booklet we will explore strategies regarding energy management, self-care, and nutrition for the holiday season.

### Manage Your Energy

#### Activity Tolerance

- Time yourself doing things. What is your tolerance for a specific activity?
- Plan how to spend your energy. What energy type will you use the most (physical, cognitive, emotional)?

#### Frequent Rest Breaks

- During the holidays it can be more difficult to stick to your resting routine. Plan an increase of restorative rest.
- What do you find calming or recharging? Identify your energy boosters and restorative activities then plan time for them each day. These are just as important as the “must dos” in your day.

#### Reduce Activity

- When adding holiday preparations to your to-do list, cut something out. Be mindful not to increase your overall activity level more than 5-10%.
- What can you:
  - Simplify?
  - Delegate?
  - Eliminate?



## Activity Shifting

- Try arranging your day into a mix of emotional, mental, and physical activity. You could also shift activity according to difficulty or energy use.

## Prioritize Tasks

- Plan your week the Friday before (not Sunday night or Monday morning).
- If you find you have too many urgent tasks and not enough balance, then re-think your priorities. How could you reduce activity?
- It can be impossible to get through everything you want to. Making a to-do and not-to-do list can be liberating and help to be realistic about what you can complete.
- Priority setting - decide for you what is:
  - Urgent (must be done today)
  - Important (must be done in the next few days)
  - For later (must be done this week or month)
  - Perhaps never (keep the big picture in mind)



## Environment

Your environment and how you stand/sit (position) yourself can make a difference for energy management.

- Minimize noise and clutter and use lights that are neither too bright nor too dim.
- Consider battery operated candles.
- Put string lights on a timer or use a foot switch in order to avoid bending down to power outlets.
- Avoid awkward positions and practice proper lifting techniques.
- Change positions every 15 to 30 minutes or adjust to your activity tolerance.

## Relaxation

- If you are anticipating a heavy day, build in time before and after for rest and relaxation.
- Make a list of things you find calming so you have it handy when fatigue or brain fog hits.

## Reframe and Reflect

- Build in time to discuss and problem solve with others and for unanticipated interruptions, mistakes, or distractions. Breathe!
- Re-evaluate traditions:
  - Is this important to you or someone else?
  - Can you simplify it or let go of it?
  - Can someone else take over?



**What holiday preparations are you worried about?**

**What pacing strategy might help?**

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# **Applying these Principles to Holiday Preparations**

## **Greeting Cards**

- Prioritize who is getting a card.
- Type instead of handwrite or order printed cards online.
- Send a voice/video/email message instead of a card.
- Use an e-card
- Start writing cards early (e.g. one card a week from August).

## **Gifts**

- Use gift wrapping service in stores; some of them are free!
- Order online. (Amazon, Etsy etc.)
- Reduce gift giving (e.g. Secret Santa, there are apps for this too).
- Start early; whenever you see something get it (even in May).

## **Decorating**

- Have a decorating party.
- Delegate any heavy lifting, bending, or awkward positions to others.
- Limit decorations to your favourite pieces.
- Take down decorations slowly over a period of time.

## **Friends and Family**

- Discuss expectations and adjustments with friends and family (e.g. full turkey dinner vs potluck, overnight guests, etc.).
- Prioritize what are the most important things to you. Find out what are the most important things to friends and family? Can someone else take over a tradition?

## **Attending Events**

- Provide the host with a time frame that you can attend and stick to your limit (e.g. staying for 1 hour).



- Consider emotional energy expenditure: socializing and seeing family and friends takes energy too.
- Set expectations for yourself based on your energy level (i.e. useable hours).
- Plan to incorporate your coping/relaxation strategies into the event (e.g. breathing, mindfulness, or gentle movement exercises).
- Consider the environment:
  - Look for a quieter corner, sit when possible, change posture or position frequently.
  - Bring your own support such as seat cushion/pillow if needed.
  - Don't feel the need to talk to everyone; allow others to come to you.
- Have an exit strategy.
- Plan for recovery.

**What other holiday preparations will you have to manage?**

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## SECTION 2: EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

### Managing Chronic Illness over the Holidays

During the various holiday seasons, the demands and expectations of others—along with the pressure we place on ourselves—can significantly impact our ability to function and truly enjoy the festivities. That's why it's so important to explore how we can better take care of ourselves during these times. In the following section, we'll discuss tools and strategies to help minimize stress and manage the difficult emotions that may arise during holidays.



## Self-Care

Self-Care refers to the activities and practices that support our health and help us recharge, reduce stress, and feel balanced.

- 1. What are some ways you currently manage stressors in your everyday life? (E.g. mindful breathing, spending time in nature, creative outlets)**

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- 2. Who can you count on when you are struggling? (Family, friends, pets, counsellor, crisis line)**

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**BC Crisis Line 1-800-784-2433**



# SELF-CARE IDEAS



@introverteddoodles

## Self-Compassion vs Self Care

So, what is self-compassion? You're probably familiar with the concept of *compassion*—the feeling that arises when you witness another person's suffering and feel motivated to relieve it. As humans, we are naturally wired for compassion. It connects us to others, and we often feel it easily for those around us. However, extending that same compassion to ourselves doesn't always come as naturally.

The feelings and actions of self-compassion are no different from compassion for others—except that they are directed inward. But why is this so much harder? As the saying goes, we're often our own worst critics.

Self-compassion isn't about treating yourself to a bubble bath once a week. While self-care focuses on taking actions to nurture yourself, self-compassion involves offering yourself kindness, support, and patience—especially during moments of inner struggle. When we constantly criticize ourselves, we activate our stress response, which triggers the sympathetic nervous system (ie, fight, flight or freeze). In contrast, showing compassion to your body and mind—by asking yourself what you need or speaking to yourself as you would to a close friend—helps turn down the body's stress response. So self compassion is not just emotionally supportive; it's actually beneficial for your health!

### 3 Components of Self Compassion



#### **Mindfulness**

Being aware of the physical, emotional, or mental pain of the moment.



#### **Self-kindness**

Treating ourselves with kindness, considering our own needs.



#### **Common Humanity**

Recognizing that these experiences are a normal part of being human.

# Self-Compassion Break Activity

Kristin Neff

<https://self-compassion.org/>

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress - nothing too difficult for you (about a 3 or 4 out of 10). Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body. Now, say to yourself:

## 1. This is a moment of suffering.

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- *This hurts.*
- *Ouch.*
- *This is stress.*

## 2. Suffering is a part of life.

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- *Other people feel this way.*
- *I'm not alone.*
- *We all struggle in our lives.*

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you. Say to yourself:

## 3. May I be kind to myself.

You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

- *May I give myself the compassion that I need.*
- *May I learn to accept myself as I am.*
- *May I forgive myself.*
- *May I be strong.*
- *May I be patient.*



This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

## Self-Advocacy

It can be empowering and give us a greater sense of comfort and more control over our circumstances when we are able to self-advocate. We can do this by:

- Educating others about our needs.
- Expressing how we are feeling in relation to a particular situation.
- Making our illness visible to others by sharing our experience and helping others to understand us. **OR** making the decision to not explain ourselves when others ask or expect us to.
- Setting boundaries and giving ourselves time to consider an ask by saying “I’d like some time to think about it so I can make sure this is something I can commit to”.
- Respectfully declining and saying “no” when we aren’t able to meet a demand.
- Building understanding around our illness with loved ones by letting them know for example:
  - “If I don’t answer the phone it’s because I’m not feeling well, not because I don’t want to talk to you. Try me back on another day.”
  - “I take my daily rest break at 3:00 for an hour so please carry on without me and I’ll rejoin you when I’m ready to.”

**Is there a strategy you already use or would like to implement with those in your life?**

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## Communication and Difficult Situations

When encountering challenging situations or individuals, it can be helpful to have a plan for communication. Nonviolent Communication, or Compassionate Communication, is a tool that helps us express our feelings, communicate our needs, and navigate conflict by making clear requests.

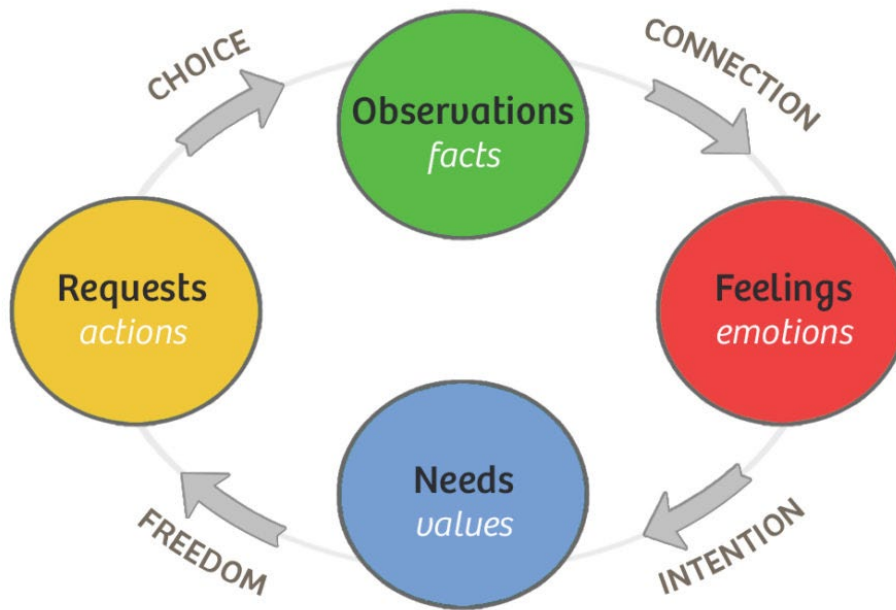
It involves 4 steps:

1. **Observation:** Describe what you see or hear, without judgment.
2. **Feelings:** Express how you feel (not your thoughts) in response to what you observed.
3. **Needs:** Identify the needs or values behind your feelings.
4. **Request:** Make a clear, positive request for action that could meet your needs.



## Here are two examples:

1. “When I hear you say that I ‘look fine’ (*Observation*), I feel frustrated and sad (*Feeling*) because I assume you think I exaggerate my symptoms. I value having those in my life understand and recognize my illness (*Need/Value*). Is it possible for you to ask me how I am feeling instead of making a determination based on my appearance? (*Request*)”



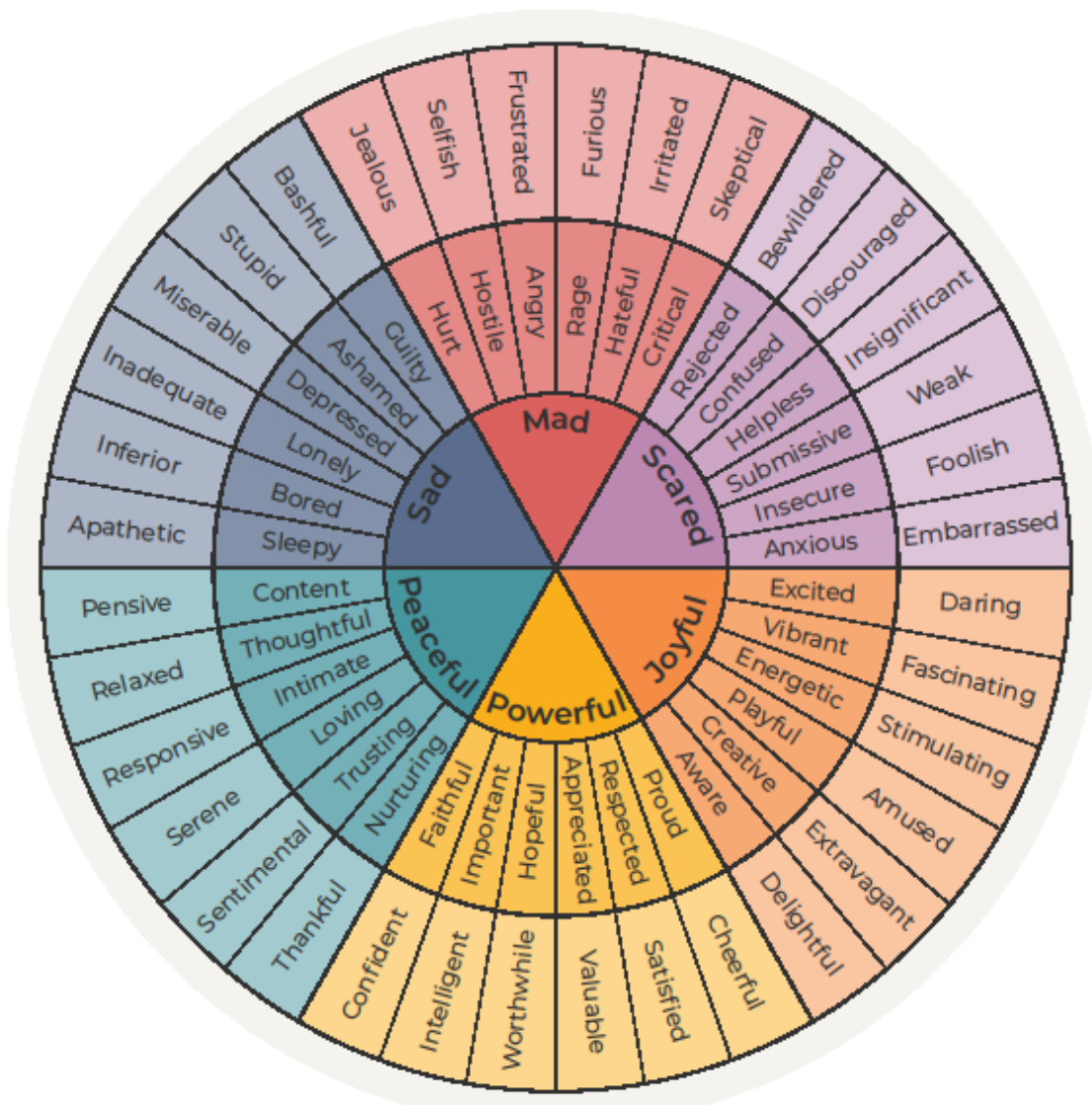
1 Marshall Rosenberg

2. “When I ask for your help with preparing for guests and you don’t contribute (*Observation*), I feel hurt and disappointed (*Feeling*). This makes me think you don’t respect our agreement around house chores and believe I can manage them on my own when I can’t. I need your help with chores when we are expecting company so that I can have energy to socialize when they arrive (*Need/Value*). Would you be able to help me clean the living room (*Request*) ? ”

For more information on the NonViolent Communication Model, see pgs 29-30 of the Appendix.

## Emotions

- Naming our feelings can be a helpful way to manage our emotions. It can help us process them, feel less overwhelmed, and make better choices about how to respond.
- Research shows that saying out loud or thinking to yourself "I feel sad," "I feel angry," or "I feel anxious" can reduce the intensity of your emotions. Feelings also alert us to our needs. Once more aware of what we are feeling, we can take steps to respond and try to meet our needs or communicate them to others.



Gottman Institute: Gloria Wilcox

## SECTION 3: NUTRITION

### Eating Healthy During the Holidays

The holidays are a time of indulgence, overabundance, and celebration – most of which involves food! Sugary or rich foods are often items that are limited the rest of the year, but available everywhere during the holidays. Often these foods play a part in increasing symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog, and digestive symptoms.

Special events, traditions, and obligations can move us away from our normal routines, which can further affect digestion, energy, and mood.

In this section, we will look at how to manage digestive symptoms and balance eating well, while being social and enjoying festive foods.



**What are your major barriers to healthy eating over the holidays?**

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## What holiday foods or habits do you find increase your symptoms?

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## Strategies for Eating Well During the Holidays

- Continue to keep your healthy staples available for quick meals and snacks such as: canned beans and fish, frozen fruits and vegetables, pre-cooked brown rice, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, low sodium soups and broths, oats, quinoa, packaged chopped fruits and vegetables, liquid eggs, whole grain, or legume pastas.
- If you have dietary restrictions, share your restrictions with the host so they can provide you with some alternatives. If your list of “safe food” options is limited, consider bringing along a dish you know you can eat, or have a filling snack before you go.
- Bring healthy, convenient options with you to snack on such as trail mix, roasted chickpeas or edamame, snack bars (e.g. Kind, Nakd, Nature’s Path), nuts, fruit/veg squeeze pouches, energy bites, or whole grain crackers.
- Try your best to maintain a regular eating schedule and include breakfast each day. Eat a snack 1 to 2 hours before an event so you're not facing all the food and drink options on an empty stomach.



- At parties, avoid grazing. Instead, fill up a plate once with what you would like and slowly nibble from that. This can help decrease digestive symptoms.
- Don't eat “holiday food” just because it's there. Instead, choose foods that you really want, and then enjoy every bite mindfully. Paying attention to what you eat helps you enjoy it and feel satisfied.

## TAKE HOME EXERCISE



### Does it have to be all or nothing??

No! You can still enjoy family, friends, and food while eating healthy. Think about “sometimes” vs. “every day” foods, and what this looks like for your daily intake.

Remember, part of normal eating involves *sometimes* overeating or eating for pleasure without feeling guilty. Simply make the decision to eat and then savour and enjoy!

If it helps, you could think about the pros and cons before making a decision. Example: “I have decided to eat sweets throughout the holiday season that I don’t normally eat.”

Pros	Cons
I feel included.	My energy level is lower overall so I don’t feel like socializing.
I don’t feel embarrassed because I don’t have to decline.	My digestive system doesn’t feel good and I feel embarrassed because I have to run to the bathroom.
It sure tastes good going down.	I don’t feel hungry for other nutritious foods like protein or vegetables.
It gives me a burst of energy and makes me feel happy.	I crash after the holidays and that makes me feel very sad and frustrated.

**Try weighing the pros and cons for other questions you may have for yourself.**

## Alternatives and Substitutions for Traditional Foods

If you're enjoying a rare special meal, maybe you don't need to be concerned about the nutritional value of the food that day. If you're being offered many foods outside of your regular eating pattern, over an extended period of time, or you know certain traditional foods are triggers for symptoms, maybe you want to think of having alternatives available.

Traditional Foods	Alternatives
<b>Cookies, sweets, pastries, chocolate, and snack foods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fancy mixed nuts and cheeses</li><li>• Special fruit you wouldn't normally buy due to price</li><li>• Other special foods like caviar, oysters, olives, etc.</li><li>• Share portions with someone</li><li>• Re-gift chocolates and sweets</li><li>• Lower sodium crackers or chips</li></ul>
<b>Sugary beverages and alcohol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dilute drinks with sparkling water or club soda</li><li>• Sparkling water or club soda with a bit of fruit juice, lemon, lime, ginger, or mint</li><li>• Concentrated flavourings such as MiO or Crystal Light</li><li>• Digestive-friendly teas such as ginger or peppermint</li></ul>
<b>Starchy foods (refined foods or items made with white flour)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose your vegetables and protein first and have a small portion of your favourite starches</li><li>• Starches packed with nutrients (yams, peas, whole grains, squash)</li></ul>
<b>Salty, rich, fatty foods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use fresh or dried herbs, spices, and black pepper</li><li>• Use smaller amounts of sauces, gravy, and butter</li><li>• Lower fat or lower sodium cheeses</li></ul>

**Think about the holiday foods or habits you identified above. What are some realistic food alternatives or nutrition strategies you would like to try this year?**

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## **SECTION 4: HOLIDAY HOSTING**

*Attending* holiday events and activities can be draining enough, let alone *hosting* them!

**What holiday preparations or events do you find the most energy draining? Which of these do you think you could modify or skip?**

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# Strategies for Hosting

## Before the Event: Planning

- Use to-do lists, break tasks down into smaller parts, and delegate tasks to others. For example, ask friends or family to help with set up/take down, bringing food out at a certain time, or packing up leftovers.
- Spread out tasks such as preparing meals and baking over a few days/weeks prior. The freezer is your friend, pace your prep.
- Cut out some of the prep by using pre-chopped vegetables, frozen vegetables, instant potatoes, cooked turkey from the deli, or a turkey roast (instead of a whole turkey).
- Plan the ‘party type’ around your needs. For example, a sit-down dinner instead of a stand-up cocktail party. Potluck events are a great idea for sharing the work of providing the meal. Give guests a suggestion of what to bring so you don’t end up with duplicates.
- Decide what is important to you, substitute activities – don’t try to add on an event on top of your normal schedule, take a few non-essential tasks out.
- Use pre-emptive rest. Clear your schedule the day before/day of the event to ensure you are staying within your energy allowances.
- Consider online grocery shopping and delivery, especially for heavy items.
- Find some good grocery store deli/pre-made options and add a few gourmet touches for that ‘almost homemade’ taste and look. Costco has some good options for larger groups. Here are some examples:
  - Bagged salads – can add in pumpkin or sunflower seeds, dried cranberries, pomegranate arils, feta or goat’s cheese, fresh herbs, walnuts or slivered almonds, mandarin wedges.
  - Instant potatoes – can add in fresh parsley or chives, top with crumbled bacon.



- Stove-top stuffing – can add in dried cranberries, fresh herbs, sautéed onion/celery/mushrooms/chestnuts/garlic/carrot.
- Store bought soup – can add a garnish of fresh herbs or roasted chickpeas, drizzle olive oil.
- Consider a catering service for special meals or part of meals.

## **Before the Event: Manage Expectations**

- Talk to your friends and family about what you can and can't do, be kind to yourself. Set boundaries around the party duration.
- Environmental tricks: plan the space around your needs. For example, lots of chairs if you need to sit regularly.

## **During the Event**

- Have relaxation and rest break options. Use a withdrawal space such as sitting quietly in the coat room/bedroom for restorative rest or to regroup after lots of stimulation.
- Tidy as you go/ask guest to clean up one thing.
- Use kitchen tools wisely – slow cookers, rice cookers, instant pots, food processors, coolers, etc. Oven to table dishes are helpful and mean less things to wash!
- Have a self-serve drink station set up outside of the kitchen to keep it a less busy area. You can use a cooler to keep drinks cold and provide ice.
- Use disposable dishes, cutlery, and napkins. Disposable cookware can also help lighten the load for cleanup.

## **After the Event**

- Plan for recovery rest, clear your schedule.

**What are some holiday hosting strategies that could be helpful for you?**

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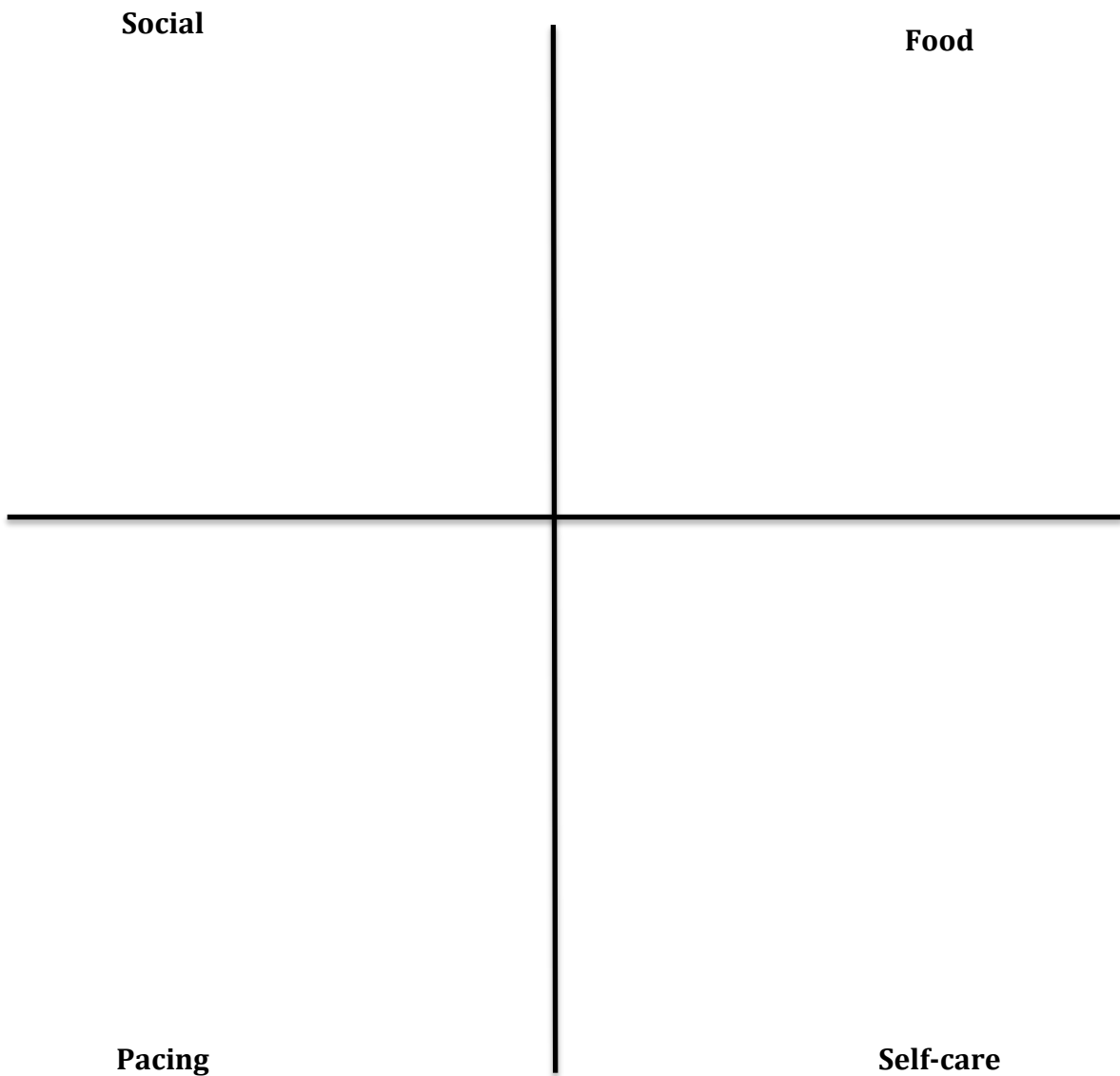
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GBT.org illustration/ SHREYA DODBALLAPUR

## Group Activity

With the group, brainstorm some strategies for the holidays in the below categories:



## SECTION 5: APPENDIX

### Energy and Pacing Related Resources

#### To Do and Not to do list

Must do (priority)	Due	Done	Nice to-do	Due	Done	Not to-do

#### Activity Tolerance Log

**\*Use a timer**

Activity	When symptoms start/intensify	Safe baseline
Ex. Preparing dinner	10 minutes	8 minutes

## Emotional Wellbeing Related Resources

Connect with others during the holidays:

- Check in with your neighborhood house for community events.
- Different faith communities might host or know of events in your area.
- Contact your local yoga studio they might know about retreats or events.
- Community centers often have information about events.

**Check out some other tips on caring for your emotional and mental wellbeing during holiday times:**

[Managing Your Mental Health During the Holidays](#)

[Five Strategies for Mental Wellness This Holiday](#)



## 4 Components of an NVC Expression

### 1. **OBSERVATION**

(free of judgments, labels, diagnoses, opinions, etc.)

### 2. **FEELING** (free of thoughts)

Examples of feelings when needs ARE met:

Affectionate	Confident	Engaged
Excited	Exhilarated	Grateful
Inspired	Hopeful	Exuberant
Joyful	Calm	Refreshed

Examples of feelings when needs are NOT met:

Annoyed	Angry	Disgusted
Uneasy	Detached	Tense
Embarrassed	Tired	Sad
Vulnerable	Scared	Pain

### 3. **NEED** (universal human needs free of strategies)

Examples:

Beauty	Autonomy	Empathy
Mourning	Honesty	Love
Meaning	Safety	Respect
Community	Contribution	Mutuality
Authenticity	Transparency	Acceptance
To be valued	Play	Support

### 4. **REQUEST** (free of demands)

## 2 Ways of Moving Toward Connection

### 1. **Honestly express** your own feelings & needs

- Ongoing awareness of feelings & connected needs in present moment
- Willingness & courage to express those feelings & needs (vulnerability)

### 2. **Empathically listen** to other's feelings & needs

- Qualities of empathic listening: presence, focus, space, caring, verbal reflection of feelings & needs
- NOT advising, fixing, consoling, story-telling, sympathizing, analyzing, explaining, ...
- No matter what is said, hear only feelings, needs, observations & requests

"When I see/hear/notice..."

"... I feel ..."

"... because I need/value ..."

"Would you be willing to ...?"

Example: "When I see you read the newspaper while I'm talking, I feel frustrated because I'm wanting to be heard. Would you be willing to close the newspaper for 5 minutes and hear my idea?"

Are you feeling ... because you need ...?

## How You Can Use the NVC Process



Clearly expressing  
how **I am**  
without blaming  
or criticizing

Empathically receiving  
how **you are**  
without hearing  
blame or criticism

### OBSERVATIONS

1. What I observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from my evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to my well-being:

*"When I (see, hear) . . . "*

1. What you observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from your evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to your well-being:

*"When you see/hear . . . "*

*(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)*

### FEELINGS

2. How I feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what I observe:

*"I feel . . . "*

2. How you feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what you observe:

*"You feel . . . "*

### NEEDS

3. What I need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes my feelings:

*"... because I need/value . . . "*

3. What you need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes your feelings:

*"... because you need/value . . . "*

Clearly requesting that  
which would enrich **my**  
life without demanding

Empathically receiving that  
which would enrich **your** life  
without hearing any demand

### REQUESTS

4. The concrete actions I would like taken:

*"Would you be willing to . . . ?"*

4. The concrete actions you would like taken:

*"Would you like . . . ?"*

*(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)*



# Food and Nutrition Related Resources

## Articles of Interest

- 1) Lighten Up Your Holiday Recipes (Choose healthy fats and limit the amount of salt and sugar you use), by HealthLink BC:  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/more/health-features/lighten-your-holiday-recipes>
- 2) Eating Healthy at Holiday Parties, by HealthLink BC:  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/eating-habits/eating-healthy-holiday-parties>
- 3) Holiday Food Safety, by UnlockFood.ca & Dietitians of Canada:  
<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/ViewPDF.aspx?docid=8516&respgid=1936&lang=en&datemod=2016-10-09%2010:31:14%20PM>
- 4) 10 Tips for a Delicious and Healthy Holiday Season  
<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Holidays-Celebrations/10-tips-for-a-delicious-and-healthy-holiday-season.aspx>
- 5) How to Cook Thanksgiving Dinner for Two, by Stress Baking:  
<https://stressbaking.com/thanksgiving-dinner-for-two/>
- 6) Thanksgiving Dishes You Can Make In A Crock Pot, by Buzzfeed:  
[https://www.buzzfeed.com/christinebyrne/slow-cooker-thanksgiving?utm\\_term=.snnXYNRVq#.om1R2ObeA](https://www.buzzfeed.com/christinebyrne/slow-cooker-thanksgiving?utm_term=.snnXYNRVq#.om1R2ObeA)
- 7) Turkey tips:
  - Crisp-Skinned Spatchcocked (Butterflied) Roast Turkey With Gravy Recipe, by Serious Eats:  
<https://www.serious-eats.com/recipes/2012/11/butterfiled-roast-turkey-with-gravy-recipe.html>
  - Turkey Food Safety, by UnlockFood.ca & Dietitians of Canada:  
<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/ViewPDF.aspx?docid=8986&respgid=2406&lang=en&datemod=2014-10-01%209:40:02%20AM>
- 8) The Basics of Food Safety, by Partnership for Food Safety Education:  
<http://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/>
- 9) Healthy Hanukkah Recipes
  - <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/19914/holidays-occasions/more-holidays/hanukkah/>
  - <https://healthyjewishfood.co.uk/category/judis-latest-recipes/>



- <https://elanaspantry.com/healthy-hanukkah-dinner-menu/>
  - <https://cleanplates.com/recipes/healthy-hanukkah-recipes/>
- 10) Healthy Diwali recipes shared by nutritionists:  
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/food-news/diwali-special-7-healthy-diwali-recipes-shared-by-nutritionist/photostory/105067567.cms>
- 11) How a Dietitian Balances Health and Food When Celebrating Kwanzaa:  
<https://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/how-a-dietitian-balances-health-and-food-when-celebrating-kwanzaa/>
- 12) Holiday Foods From Around the World (with recipes):  
<https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/ND21p22.shtml>

## Ingredient Substitutions for Healthier Recipes

Swap out some ingredients to make your favourite holiday dishes with less fat, sugar, and salt.

Ingredient	Amount	Substitution
Bacon	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup low-sodium turkey bacon</li> <li>1 cup lean prosciutto (Italian ham)</li> </ul>
Bread, white	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup whole grain or whole wheat bread</li> </ul>
Breadcrumbs	1/2 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 cup rolled oats or crushed bran cereal</li> </ul>
Butter for baking	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup pureed avocado, applesauce, mashed banana, sweet potato puree, or pumpkin puree</li> <li>1/2 cup oil + 1/2 cup pureed avocado, applesauce, mashed banana, sweet potato puree, or pumpkin puree</li> <li>1/2 cup oil + 1/2 cup pureed beans (kidney or black beans; best if product is dark in colour)</li> <li>3/4 cup prunes with 1/4 cup boiling water pureed (for use in dark baked goods)</li> <li>1/2 cup oil + 1 Tbsp chia seeds mixed with 1/2 cup water (let stand ~ 15min until gel-like)</li> </ul> <p><b>** Note: using mashed fruit in place of butter may reduce the cooking time by ~ 25%**</b></p>
Butter for frying	1 Tbsp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use less than the recipe calls for</li> <li>Replace butter with cooking spray, water, or broth</li> <li>Use no butter in a non-stick frying pan</li> </ul>
Buttermilk	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup plain yogurt or plain Greek yogurt</li> </ul>
Cheese, cheddar	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 cup extra sharp cheddar cheese + 1/2 tsp dry mustard (for extra flavour)</li> </ul>

Ingredient	Amount	Substitution
Cream cheese	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup light cream cheese</li> <li>1 cup low-fat cottage cheese (puree until smooth)</li> <li>1 cup Greek Yogurt</li> </ul>
Chocolate chips	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 to 2/3 cup dark chocolate chips</li> <li>1/2 cup regular chocolate chips + 1/2 cup chopped dried fruits (cranberries, raisins, apricots or cherries)</li> </ul>
Cream, half & half (10-12% M.F.)	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup evaporated skim milk, undiluted</li> </ul>
Cream, heavy	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup evaporated skim milk</li> <li>1/2 cup heavy cream + 1/2 cup non-fat plain yogurt</li> <li>2/3 cup skim milk + 1/3 cup vegetable oil, blended</li> </ul>
Egg	1 whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 egg whites</li> <li>1/4 cup egg substitute</li> <li>1 Tbsp. chia seeds (or flaxseed meal) with 3 Tbsp warm water. Stir and let sit for ~ 5 min to gel. If needed, you can grind chia meal (instead of whole chia seeds) for a smoother texture.</li> </ul>
Flour, white, all-purpose for baking	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup minus 1 Tbsp. whole wheat flour</li> <li>1 cup whole wheat pastry flour</li> <li>1/2 cup white flour + 1/2 cup whole wheat flour</li> <li>1/3 cup wheat germ + 2/3 cup all-purpose flour</li> <li>1/4 cup ground flaxseeds + 3/4 cup all-purpose flour</li> </ul>
Icing (frosting)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Top dessert with fresh fruit or pureed fruit</li> <li>Top with a light dusting of powdered icing sugar</li> </ul>

Ingredient	Amount	Substitution
Mayonnaise	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup plain yogurt, plain Greek yogurt, sour cream, or cottage cheese (pureed in blender). Use alternatives for all or part of mayonnaise called for in recipe.</li> <li>May need to add a bit of lemon juice or Dijon mustard for extra flavour.</li> </ul>
Milk, whole (full fat)	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup skim milk or 1%</li> <li>1/2 cup evaporated skim milk + 1/2 cup water</li> <li>1 cup fortified soy or almond beverage</li> </ul>
Nuts, salted	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 to 2/3 cup of unsalted nuts</li> </ul>
Pasta, white	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup whole grain or whole wheat pasta</li> </ul>
Rice, white	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup brown or wild rice</li> </ul>
Salt		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can omit and use extra herbs/spices instead</li> <li>Citrus juices (lemon, lime, orange)</li> <li>Rice vinegar</li> <li>Salt-free seasoning mixes or herb blends (e.g. Mrs. Dash®)</li> </ul>
Soups, canned & condensed	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup fat-free version</li> </ul>
Sour cream, full fat	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 cup sour cream, low-fat or fat-free</li> <li>1 cup plain Greek yogurt (non-fat or with fat)</li> <li>1 cup plain yogurt (non-fat or with fat); blended with 15 mL of cornstarch if it will be cooked</li> <li>1 cup evaporated skim milk + 1 Tbsp vinegar (allow to stand 5 minutes before using)</li> </ul>
Soy sauce, regular	1/4 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce</li> <li>1/4 cup Bragg® liquid soy seasoning</li> </ul>

Ingredient	Amount	Substitution
Sugar	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 cup sugar or honey</li> <li>• 1/2 cup sugar + vanilla, almond extract, nutmeg, or cinnamon to intensify sweetness</li> </ul>
Syrup	1 Tbsp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Tbsp pureed fruit</li> </ul>
Whipping cream	1 cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup evaporated milk, chilled until almost frozen, then whipped</li> <li>• 3/4 cup aquafaba (i.e. chickpea water, drained from the can) + 1/4 tsp cream of tartar + 2/3 cup icing sugar + 1 tsp canola oil, blended for ~ 5 min until stiff peaks formed.</li> </ul>

### **For Hanukkah**

- To add variety to traditional latkes, consider incorporating alternative root vegetables like sweet potatoes, leeks, or zucchini. You can also experiment with protein-rich ingredients such as ricotta cheese.
- Opt for healthier cooking methods like using olive oil instead of animal fats or preparing latkes in an air fryer or oven to decrease saturated fat content. For those looking to reduce added sugars, serve latkes with unsweetened applesauce.
- Make a lighter cheese kugel by substituting reduced-fat cheese and sour cream. Reduce sugar content with natural sweeteners like stevia or fruit to create a healthier dish.

### **For Lunar New Year**

- Replace white rice or noodles with fiber-rich options like whole wheat noodles, brown rice vermicelli, or buckwheat noodles to increase nutritional value. Consider swapping white rice for brown rice, too.

- Use high-sodium Asian sauces sparingly, such as: soy sauce, hoisin sauce, oyster sauce, or chili sauce. Be careful with your use of sugar and oil, too. Instead, enhance flavors with ingredients like dried mushrooms, shrimps, clams, herbs, and spices. Consider soya sauce alternatives such as Coconut Aminos, which offer a similar umami flavor but are lower in sodium and contain natural sugars.
- Achieve a balanced and nutritious dumpling filling, by using a 75/25 vegetable-to-meat ratio. This ensures you're incorporating fiber, vitamins, and minerals while keeping fat and calories in check. Opt for low-fat, low-calorie protein sources like diced shrimp or crumbled tofu as healthier alternatives to ground pork.

## **Other Holiday Hacks**

- Use a slow cooker to keep mashed potatoes warm.
- “Salad bar as a sous chef” – purchase already prepped ingredients from a salad bar such as at Whole Foods (for example).
- Scrub and boil potatoes whole, then put in cold water for a few minutes, the peels will come right off.
- Stuffing ‘muffins’: prepare stuffing as usual then bake in muffin tins; prepare in advance and freeze or refrigerate them then reheat.
- Use a cooler for extra fridge space for drinks or desserts. A cooler can also be used to keep things warm before serving.
- Make a large batch of ‘hard boiled eggs’ in the oven by baking them in muffin tins at 350 for 30 minutes. Plunge in ice water for 10 minutes to stop the cooking process and for easy peeling.
- Try out baked or slow cooker strata or French toast recipes to feed a crowd at brunch instead of labour-intensive pancakes or traditional French toast.
- Quick and easy ‘gingerbread’ houses can be assembled using graham crackers.

- Put a twist on an easy favourite treat – add in peanut butter, hot chocolate powder, or mini chocolate chips to crispy rice dessert recipe:  
<https://cookiesandcups.com/hot-chocolate-krispies/>
- Use one ‘mother dough’ as a start to make up to 6 different cookies:  
<https://thebakermama.com/recipes/one-cookie-dough-seven-possible-flavors/>
- Tape recipes onto the cabinets in front of your workspace for easy access. This is also a great way to delegate tasks since the recipe is accessible to any helpers. If you’re doing early prep work, make a note on the recipe of where you left off.

