



SOUTHWEST COUNSELING AND MINDFULNESS CENTER

3 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The Holidays are coming! The Holidays are coming! You have survived them before. Your memories are filled with recollections of past Holiday Seasons. Some are pleasant and some are not so pleasant. Theories about the nature of all organisms to seek pleasure and to avoid suffering in order to survive are especially relevant when applied to human beings. After all we are the most evolved organisms known to mankind. Remembering and thinking allow us to predict and plan so we can intervene and have influence on the outcomes and consequences of events including the resulting feelings we have about ourselves and others. We can then be safer (pleasant feeling) and avoid being uncomfortable (unpleasant suffering). Some of these suggestions you may already know or have heard before. Being reminded of them validates that previous knowledge and can help give you the advantage of remembering to use them to prepare for a safer (physically and emotionally) Holiday Season ... so you can survive the best you can.

1. **Be kind to yourself:** Eat right, get enough rest, exercise, drink lots of water and give yourself permission to trust your instincts about how you want to spend your time and with whom. Don't overindulge or over commit. You only have 24 hours a day be selective with your free time.
2. **Set Boundaries For Your Emotional Safety:** "Boundaries" is a descriptive noun borrowed from geography. Just like a country can have boundaries separating and protecting what belongs to it (land, water, factories, populations, etc.) from other countries, people can have boundaries to protect what belongs to them (self-esteem, a sense of well-being, pride, hope, confidence, accomplishments). Boundaries keep us safe. Emotional Safety is different for everyone but basically means whether or not you feel like you can trust that the person or group to not behave in ways that are harmful. Being un-safe emotionally might include being inclined to be distrustful or looking for possible hidden meanings and potential threats in someone's words and behaviors. Idealized representations of "Going Home for the Holidays" may not fit with the realities of being around someone who was unkind or abusive in the past or who chooses use put-downs or other communication techniques to disparage or be destructive. Boundaries can be set to protect your Emotional Safety by reducing exposure potential harm. Limiting time together for your emotional safety may mean not staying around after the big meal to watch the football game on TV or only staying for an overnight visit and going home the next day. A limit on physical proximity could be set by booking a hotel room down the street or maybe in a nearby city. Or just calling to say "Happy Holidays".
3. **Use the 20-Minute Rule:** This "rule" is familiar with professionals who work with people dealing with loss and grief, but is relevant for anyone. Should you find yourself without the energy or inclination to attend a Holiday function, but feel duty – bound to attend use the 20 Minute Rule: Go and make an appearance, stay for 20 minutes and then excuse yourself.

HOPE YOU HAVE A HAPPY SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON!