

stress-free holiday

To put an end to the comparathon

“My personal best is enough”

Whether you're decorating or picking out a dress for a party, you can't stop comparing yourself to the picture-perfect Joneses. “We're inundated by social media and commercialism, which activate the reactive, survival-based part of the brain and make us feel competitive,” says psychotherapist Jennifer Shannon, author of *Don't Feed the Monkey Mind*. Her advice: Short-circuit self-judgment with an affirmation like, “My personal best is enough.” Explains Shannon, “Instead of trying to prove yourself, you're shifting toward self-acceptance and self-love, which makes you more accepting and loving toward others—and that's really what the holidays are about.”

To calm family tensions

“I'm not in charge of people's feelings”

As hostess, you're eager to ensure everyone is in the holiday spirit, but a tiff between relatives threatens to spoil your festive vibes. “Women especially have a sense of needing to please others,” says Mattis. “But you don't have control over other people's reactions.” The key to saving your sanity? “When tempers flare and people are on edge, remind yourself, ‘I'm not in charge of people's feelings,’” advises Mattis. While it can be hard to detach when emotions run high, this phrase provides an anchor. “The people we love are going to be the happiest when we are calm and happy, so the best gift we can give them is our own peacefulness.”

To eliminate “there's too much to do” anxiety

“I don't have to do things the way they've always been done”

You've been charged with planning the office holiday party, but you're burned-out and can't imagine pulling together a bash like the previous organizer did. “When we try to do things the way another person has done them, it's depleting because we're not in our own energy, our own creativity,” says Mattis. “It's almost like we're abandoning ourselves, and we end up feeling exhausted.” To rally, tell yourself, “I don't have to do things the way they've always been done.” “You can free yourself to keep traditions you love and let go of things that feel old,” assures Mattis. “That brings a freshness and creativity to start new traditions.”

To ease gift-giving pressure

Buying gifts for everyone on your list has you feeling money stress, yet your generous heart keeps urging you to whip out your credit card. “When you're caught up in self-talk like, ‘I don't have enough money, but it has to be the best gift,’ you're driven by fear as opposed to what's in your heart,” observes Shannon. Rather than pressuring yourself to spend beyond your

means, tell yourself, “My values are my compass,” advises Shannon. “What's the point of giving a gift? It's about showing appreciation and connecting with people as opposed to proving yourself.” With your focus realigned, you can brainstorm less expensive gifts that inspire the love and connection you value, like a framed photo or collection of treasured recipes.

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