



Hawk and Heron Therapy
**Holiday Stress
Management Guide**

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It's the most stressful time of the year!

And that is exactly why Hawk and Heron Therapy is here to help you care for yourself, manage your holiday stress, and stay regulated so you can actually enjoy this magical season!

What follows is only a primer meant to get you thinking about how to structure your holiday season successfully. It is by no means a comprehensive strategy. Please know that it is **NORMAL** to feel stressed during the holiday season. You are not alone. If you find yourself needing additional guidance or support, Hawk & Heron Therapy Services is here to help.

Let's dive in!

Boundaries 101

During the holiday season, boundaries are your best friend. Focus on defining, communicating, and maintaining boundaries across these areas:

Financial

Time

Energy

Emotional

Physical



Set a budget and stick to it! Speak with your partner to make sure you're on the same page.



Create a calendar that includes meaningful activities AND down time.



Prioritize the activities that mean the most to you - say NO to the rest.



Check in frequently with your "bandwidth" and honor where you're at.



Care for your body by eating regularly, hydrating, resting, and limiting mood-altering substances.

Communication 101

When in doubt, over-communicate. The hectic nature of the holiday season makes clear, concise, and assertive communication especially important. Here's some ideas for fine-tuning your communication skills:



When in doubt, over communicate



If you haven't said it directly, assume they don't know



Passive communication creates confusion



Say it with your words, not your behaviors



Clear is kind

Supports 101

Don't holiday alone! Accessing your supports during the holidays helps everything run smoother. Here are some conversation starters for the important people in your life:

Partner

Discussion topics:

Budget, priorities, travel arrangements, division of labor and responsibilities, expectations.

Support requests:

Specific activities of support that help you feel seen, heard, and cared for.

Discussion topics:

Traditions, travel arrangements/accommodations, expectations of hosts/guests, budget, dietary needs, division of labor and responsibilities, Santa traditions and boundaries, gift-giving plans.

Support requests:

Up-to-date information, clear communication, other supportive offerings that help you feel prepared for family time.

Family

Friends

Discussion topics:

Activities, boundaries, expectations, gift-giving plans, Santa traditions and boundaries

Support requests:

Tell your friends specifically how they can support you and ask how you can support them. Consider introducing this helpful question is: "Are you looking for advice or support?"

Discussion topics:

Traditions, expectations, gifts, changes to “typical” holiday structures or activities, empowering kids to identify and set their own body boundaries

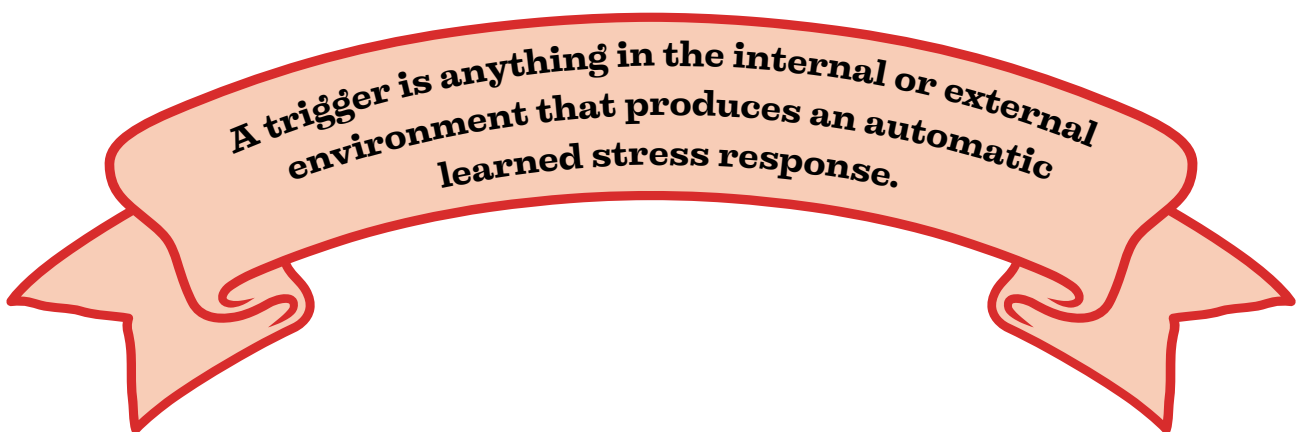
Support requests:

Keep this kid appropriate! Remember: It’s not your kids’ job to support you. BUT, they can help out with kid-level responsibilities that make life run smoother.



Triggers 101

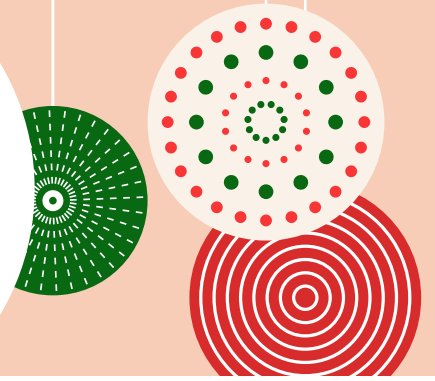
What is a “trigger” and what do you do about it? Let’s break it down:



Myths	Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Triggers only happen to folks with PTSD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Triggers are dangerous ● Triggers should be avoided at all cost ● It is others’ jobs to help limit exposure to triggers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We cannot change our trigger responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Becoming triggered is a normal part of life and healing ● Triggers are not dangerous, although they may be very uncomfortable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoiding triggers can amplify their impact ● Managing response to triggers is the goal ● We can learn to rewire our automatic responses to triggers

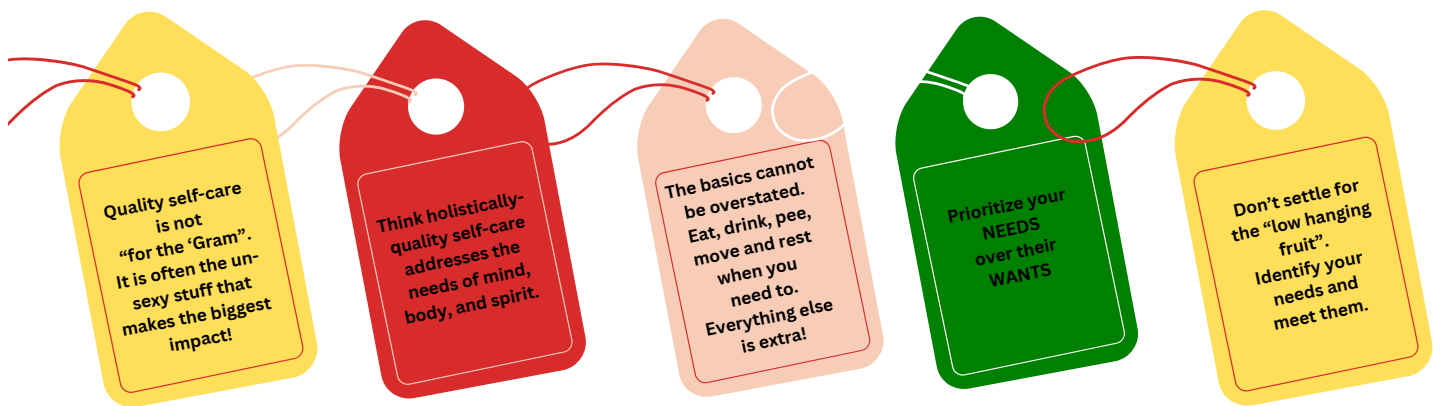
Coping with Triggers

- KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS IN ADVANCE - Plan accordingly with coping ideas, boundary statements, and contingency plans
- Deep breathing - in and out through the nose, SLOW on the exhale
- Change your body temp - use cold drinks, ice cubes, cold packs, or go outside to shock your system and catch your breath
- Develop a “safe word” for use with a loved one to let them know you need help managing triggers
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, and other mood-altering substances. They will only make a bad situation worse!



Self-Care 101

Self-care is my absolute FAVORITE topic! Self-care is essential, but often misunderstood. Here's some ideas for high quality self-care:



Meet H&H



Rebecca Ray, LSCSW
Owner | Therapist

Hi, I'm Rebecca!

I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with active licenses in Kansas, Missouri, and Maine. I have been working in mental health in both public and private practice settings for over a decade. I have a wide range of experience helping individuals heal the scars of the past.

I launched Hawk & Heron in 2023. Getting to this place professionally has required extensive training, including a Master's degree in Social Work (University of Kansas, 2010), 4000+ hours of clinical supervision (2012-2014), obtaining clinical licensure in Missouri (2015), Kansas (2020), and Maine (2024). I've trained extensively in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (2014-2018), Eye Moment Desensitization and Reprocessing (2018, 2020-2022) and many other current, evidence-based treatment modalities.

I am particularly interested in brain-body treatment approaches and have sought training in Polyvagal Theory. Discovering the importance of movement in regulating the nervous system, I now employ an "off the couch" approach to much of my clinical work. This means supporting traditional "talk therapy" with evidence-based somatic and movement strategies to help clients in building meaningful emotion regulation skills.

Outside of session, you'll find me spending time with my husband and young daughter. I love reading, I love television, and I love reading about television! I am happiest when I am outside moving my body. Despite my best efforts at being "cool", I remain a Millennial, a Mom, and a Swiftie.

Contact Us

For further information, follow @HawkAndHeronTherapy on Instagram

Need more support? Email rraytherapy@gmail.com to schedule your FREE consult today

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