# Have Your Holidays in Harmony

A simple guide to less stress and more enjoyment from Thanksgiving into the new year

By Heather | Harmony in Wellness

## Welcome

The holidays can be beautiful and exhausting at the same time. Between the food, the schedules, the family, and the to-do lists, your stress, digestion, and sleep are usually the first things to slide.

This plan is not about being perfect or following a strict diet. It's about a few small, doable habits that help you feel calmer, steadier, and more present, so you can actually enjoy this season and roll into the new year feeling good.

**How to use this guide:**

1. Spend 10 minutes on Step 1 (set your intentions)
2. Pick 3 habits from Step 2 to start with. You don't need to do them all.
3. Use the daily checklist and weekly check-ins to stay on track
4. Come back to the toolkit whenever the stress spikes

## Step 1: Set your intentions

Before the season gets busy, decide how you want to feel. Take a few quiet minutes and write your answers.

- How do I want to feel this holiday season? (Pick 3 words, such as calm, present, grateful, rested)
- What usually stresses me out at this time of year?
- What is one thing I want more of? What is one thing I want less of?
- What would make this season feel good, even if everything else is messy?

**My season intention (one sentence):**

*Example: This season, I will stay calm, enjoy the people I love, and take care of my body.*

Write it down and put it where you'll see it every day, like on your phone lock screen or the bathroom mirror.

# Step 2: Your 6 simple habits

## Habit 1: Eat simple, whole foods (the 80/20 way)

You don't have to give up holiday favorites. Aim to eat simple, whole foods most of the time, and enjoy the treats without guilt.

- **Build your plate:** half vegetables or fruit, a palm-size portion of protein, and some healthy fats and whole grains or starchy vegetables
- **Don't skip meals to "save room":** arriving very hungry makes it harder to eat calmly. Have a balanced breakfast and a small snack first.
- **Add before you take away:** add a vegetable, a glass of water, or a protein to each meal before cutting anything out
- **Choose your favorites:** pick the 2 or 3 holiday foods you truly love, and skip the ones that are just there
- **Keep it easy:** soups, sheet-pan dinners, roasted vegetables, and simple salads save time and energy
- **Go lighter on the extras:** alcohol, sugary drinks, and ultra-processed snacks can add up fast. Notice how you feel and adjust.

## Habit 2: Support your digestion

Stress and rich food can make digestion feel off. These small habits can help.

- **Slow down:** put your fork down between bites and chew your food well
- **Take 3 deep breaths before you eat.** It helps your body shift out of stress mode.
- **Drink water through the day.** Warm water or herbal tea (like ginger or peppermint) after meals feels soothing for many people.
- **Eat more fiber:** vegetables, fruit, beans, oats, nuts, and seeds
- **Take a 10-minute walk after your biggest meal**
- **Keep your meal rhythm regular** when you can, even on busy days
- **Notice patterns:** if certain foods or situations leave you uncomfortable, jot it down and adjust

## Habit 3: Breathe (2 minutes, anytime)

Breathing is the fastest tool you have to calm your body. Try these.

**4-6 breathing (best for stress in the moment)**

1. Sit or stand comfortably and relax your shoulders
2. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for a count of 6
4. Repeat for 2 minutes

**Box breathing (best for focus and overwhelm)**

1. Breathe in for 4
2. Hold for 4
3. Breathe out for 4
4. Hold for 4
5. Repeat 4 to 6 times

**When to use them:** before meals, in the car, before a family gathering, in the bathroom for a quick reset, or when you can't fall asleep.

## Habit 4: Gentle yoga and stretching (5 minutes)

You don't need a mat or any experience. Move slowly, breathe, and stop if anything hurts.

1. **Cat-cow (1 minute):** on hands and knees, arch and round your back slowly with your breath
2. **Child's pose (1 minute):** sit back on your heels, reach your arms forward, and rest your forehead down
3. **Standing forward fold (1 minute):** bend your knees, let your head and arms hang, and sway gently
4. **Seated twist (1 minute, 30 seconds each side):** sit tall and gently twist, with one hand behind you and one on the opposite knee
5. **Legs up the wall (1 minute or more):** lie on your back with your legs resting up a wall and breathe slowly

**Tip:** do this in the morning to wake up, or at night to wind down. If your neck and shoulders are tight, add slow shoulder rolls and gentle neck tilts.

## Habit 5: Walk every day

Walking lowers stress, supports digestion, and clears your head. It's the simplest habit on this list.

- **Goal:** 10 to 20 minutes a day. Shorter walks count.

- **Best times:** after meals, first thing in the morning, or as a break from a stressful moment
- **Make it enjoyable:** walk with a friend or family member, listen to music or a book/podcast, or look at holiday lights
- **Make it easy:** keep your shoes by the door, and decide when you'll walk before the day starts
- **Bad weather?** walk laps inside, march in place during a show, or do a short stretch break

### Habit 6: Sleep well

Sleep is when your body and mind reset. Late nights, extra sugar, and stress can get in the way, so protect your evenings.

- **Keep a regular bedtime and wake time** as much as you can
- **Create a 30-minute wind-down:** dim the lights, put your phone away, and do something calming like stretching, a warm shower, or reading
- **Take 5 minutes to write down tomorrow's to-do list** so your mind can let go
- **Do 4-6 breathing in bed** if your mind is racing
- **Keep your room cool, dark, and quiet**
- **Go easy on caffeine after noon, and notice how alcohol affects your sleep**
- **If you have a late night, don't panic.** Get back on track the next day.

## Holiday stress toolkit

### Saying no with kindness

- "Thank you for the invitation. I can't make it this time, but I hope you have a wonderful time."
- "I'd love to help, but I'm at my limit this week."
- "I'm going to pass on that one, but thank you."

You don't owe anyone a long explanation.

### When family stress shows up

- Take 3 slow breaths before you respond
- Step outside for a 5-minute walk or a quiet moment

- Change the subject: "Tell me about your trip" or "How's your garden?"
- Decide ahead of time how long you'll stay
- Remember that you can only control your own response

### When food feels stressful

- Eat something balanced before the gathering
- Fill your plate with what you really want, then sit and enjoy it
- Say, "No thank you, I'm all set" without apologizing
- Skip the guilt. One meal or one day does not undo your habits.

### Overwhelm reset (5 minutes)

1. Stop and put your feet on the floor
2. Do 2 minutes of 4-6 breathing
3. Drink a glass of water
4. Write down the one thing that matters most right now
5. Do just that one thing

## Daily checklist

Copy this each day, or print it and check the boxes. Pick the habits you're working on.

- [ ] Morning breathing or stretch (2 to 5 minutes)
- [ ] Balanced meals with water throughout the day
- [ ] 3 slow breaths before eating
- [ ] 10 to 20 minute walk
- [ ] Evening wind-down and a consistent bedtime
- [ ] One kind thing I did for myself today

## Weekly check-ins

Once a week, take 5 minutes to answer these questions.

- What went well this week?
- Which habit helped me most?
- What was hardest, and what could make it easier?

- How am I feeling on a scale of 1 to 10 (stress, energy, sleep)?
- What is my one focus for next week?

**Suggested focus for each week:**

- **Week 1 (Thanksgiving week):** Set your intentions and start your 3 habits
- **Week 2 (early December):** Add a walk and a wind-down routine
- **Week 3 (mid December):** Use the toolkit when things get busy. Keep it simple.
- **Week 4 (holiday week):** Focus on rest, enjoyment, and sleep
- **Week 5 (New Year's week):** Reflect and plan your next step

## Rolling into the new year

As the season winds down, take a few minutes to look back and plan ahead.

- Which 1 to 3 habits made the biggest difference for me?
- Which ones will I keep in January?
- What do I want to feel in the new year?
- What is one small step I'll take in the first week of January?

**My new year intention (one sentence):**

Start small. A few habits you keep will do more for you than a long list you can't.

## A note on your health

This guide is for general wellness education and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please talk with your healthcare provider about any health concerns, symptoms that are severe or don't go away, or before making changes to your diet or exercise routine.

Wishing you a calm, joyful season!

Be well,

**Heather** |Harmony in Wellness