

STONE & IVY

M A G A Z I N E

WELLNESS, REIMAGINED WITH INTENTION AND GRACE.

*mental wellness / lifestyle / mindfulness /
physical health / recovery / stories*





EDITOR'S NOTE

As the year begins to fold quietly into winter, the world around us hums with the familiar urgency of the holidays – the pace quickens, lists grow longer, and we often find ourselves racing toward a finish line that was never meant to exist.

At *Stone and Ivy*, this season we're pausing. We're leaning into the beauty of less.

This special holiday issue, "Less is More – A Season of Gentle Abundance," invites you to slow down, simplify, and rediscover the deep fulfillment that comes from being present rather than busy. We explore how thoughtful restraint – in our homes, our habits, and our hearts – can become an act of grace. How the quiet moments, the small gatherings, the modest gestures, often hold the most meaning.

This issue is dedicated to mental wellness through intentional living – to understanding that our peace is cultivated, not purchased. Within these pages, we look at how simplifying traditions can renew their joy, how choosing experiences over possessions can anchor us in connection, and how setting boundaries – with shopping, social obligations, and even our own expectations – can help restore balance and ease.

Our contributing writers for this edition are a remarkable group of voices – each with a background in behavioral health, and each offering thoughtful insight into how wellness can be woven into every part of life. Their collective experience and compassion add immeasurable value to this season's conversations about healing, community, and mindfulness.

We hope this issue meets you where you are – in the midst of your own balancing act – and reminds you that abundance is not about how much you gather, but how intentionally you live.

May this be your season of gentleness.
May this be your season of grace.

With warmth and gratitude,
-Jen Timothy, Stone & Ivy Editor

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ELEGANCE IN RESTRAINT

The Joy of a Minimalist Holiday



"Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication." – Leonardo da Vinci

Jen Timothy | Writer

The modern holiday season bustles with excess – glittering lights that burn late into the night, towering to-do lists, and endless displays urging us to buy, wrap, repeat. Yet in quiet corners of our hearts, we crave something gentler – a season that breathes. One that leaves room for reflection, warmth, and grace.

Minimalism, in its truest form, isn't about subtraction for its own sake. It's about creating space for what matters most. It's not the absence of joy, but the presence of peace. This December, perhaps we can reimagine the holidays not as an accumulation, but as a refinement – a return to elegance through restraint.

There is poetry in the understated. A single sprig of cedar in a glass vase. A simple linen tablecloth in place of sequins. A candle flickering softly where once there might have been excess. When we remove the clutter, the essentials begin to glow. Light feels warmer. Laughter carries further. Food tastes more like love than indulgence. In simplifying, we begin to see – and to feel – the beauty that's been there all along.

Creating a minimalist holiday home is less about decor and more about atmosphere. It's not about stripping a space bare, but filling it intentionally. A small pine branch placed in a vintage bottle. Natural textures – linen, wood, soft wool. Tones of ivory, sage, stone, and candlelight that whisper calm rather than shout for attention. These details do more than decorate a space – they honor it. They turn a house into a sanctuary.

Minimalism can also reshape how we give. The most meaningful gifts rarely come wrapped in paper. They come in presence – a walk shared in silence, a handwritten letter, a day spent together without the interruption of screens. When we trade the performance of giving for the essence of it, generosity becomes more honest, more human.

Restraint, at its heart, is not denial – it is clarity. It's knowing what truly nourishes and what simply fills. It's choosing one small tree adorned with memory instead of many glittering ornaments without meaning. It's declining another social event so you can watch the light shift across your living room. It's finding celebration in stillness.



There's a quiet kind of confidence that blooms in simplicity. A grace that doesn't need to announce itself. When we clear the clutter – physically and emotionally – we make room for what endures: connection, intention, joy. This holiday season, resist the pull toward “more.” Curate your celebrations as an artist edits a canvas, removing what distracts, keeping only what delights.

Because sometimes, restraint isn't the absence of abundance – it's the purest expression of it.

When the music softens and the lights grow dim, when the world finally feels still, you may realize the truest elegance of the season was never in what you added – but in what you let go.

In simplicity, we find clarity.
In restraint, we find joy.



PRESENCE OVER PRESENTS

A RETURN TO WHAT LASTS

Jen Timothy | Writer

There's a moment in every holiday season – quiet, fleeting – when the world seems to shimmer a little softer. Maybe it's the scent of cinnamon and pine in the air, or the hush that falls as snow begins to gather on rooftops. Maybe it's the glow of a candle reflected in a window, or the laughter of someone you love in the next room. That moment – the one that stops time just for a heartbeat – is the one we often miss while chasing everything else.

We live in a world that moves too fast, one that tells us the holidays are about doing more: buying, planning, posting, achieving. But when we slow down, when we pause long enough to simply be present, we find that what we've been searching for was never in the wrapping paper or the cart totals. It was here all along – in connection, in simplicity, in stillness.

This season, let's reclaim what matters most.

Presence is the greatest gift you can give. It doesn't require a bow or a budget. It simply asks for attention – undivided, wholehearted, and real. It's choosing to look someone in the eyes when they speak instead of glancing at the phone that keeps buzzing on the table. It's listening to a story you've heard a hundred times and smiling anyway because you know one day, you'll wish to hear it again. It's letting the conversation stretch, unhurried, long after the candles have burned low. When you offer your full presence, you remind those around you – and yourself – that being together is enough.



There is a quiet magic in nostalgia, too. The kind that tugs gently at the heart and reminds you of who you once were. The holidays are a time to nurture that inner child – to watch Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman without irony, to stir cocoa on the stove and top it with far too many marshmallows, to curl up under a blanket and lose yourself again in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Let yourself feel that wonder. The world doesn't need another perfect dinner table or curated holiday aesthetic – it needs your joy, your laughter, your ability to marvel at the small things.

Your joy has a ripple effect. When you choose stillness, others breathe easier. When you choose kindness over comparison, others soften. When you find gratitude in the simplest of moments, you illuminate the season for those around you.

Of course, joy also comes from giving – thoughtfully, mindfully, and with purpose. It's easy to get caught in the click-bait scroll of online shopping, the digital hum of deals that promise happiness with overnight shipping. But there's a richer story waiting just beyond the screen.



Bundle up and wander through your local shops. Buy from the maker who knows your name. Choose handmade, crafted, imperfectly perfect gifts that carry meaning. Support your community not out of obligation, but out of connection. When you give this way, you're not just sharing things – you're sharing care, intention, and sustainability. And know this: generosity does not have to break your budget to be beautiful. A handwritten letter, a home-cooked meal, a shared afternoon – these are the kinds of gifts that last longer than any purchase could.

The holidays were never meant to be about perfection; they were meant to be about presence.

So this year, let your calendar breathe. Let the wrapping paper be simple. Let your living room be messy with laughter and half-finished puzzles and the smell of cookies cooling on the counter. Minimize the scrolling, silence the noise, and listen for the quiet heartbeat of the season. You'll find it in the small spaces – the flicker of a candle, the clink of mugs, the shared blanket on the couch, the easy silence between people who feel at home in each other's company.

Because presence is the pulse of the holidays. It's what makes the ordinary moments extraordinary.

THE HOT COCOA GATHERING

The best gifts are made & shared together



There's something timeless about a winter evening spent in good company – the clink of mugs, the hum of soft laughter, the scent of cookies baking while music drifts gently through the room. These are the moments that remind us what the holidays were meant to be: not perfect, but present. This year, consider trading the rush of crowded stores for the warmth of a kitchen filled with friends. Host a hot cocoa gathering – a simple, heartfelt way to celebrate the season through shared creativity and connection. Invite a few loved ones over, set out mugs and toppings, and spend an evening together baking cookies, wrapping gifts, and making small treasures by hand. No pressure, no perfection – just the joy of being together.

Begin with something comforting. A simple hot cocoa bar can feel like magic all on its own – warm milk or milk alternatives, cocoa powder, a dash of cinnamon, and a few sweet toppings like peppermint, marshmallows, or shaved chocolate. Encourage everyone to make their own signature mug, to slow down, sip slowly, and stay awhile. Add soft music, a few candles, maybe some evergreen branches or eucalyptus scattered on the table. Let the conversation wander, the cookies bake, and the wrapping paper crinkle. These small, sensory details are grounding; they connect us back to the moment, to each other, and to the beauty of slowing down.

Cookies, especially when made together, have a way of turning an ordinary evening into a memory. Choose simple, forgiving recipes – sugar cookies for decorating, spiced ginger snaps, or chocolate crinkles dusted in powdered sugar. While the cookies bake, set up a small table for crafting homemade ornaments or holiday gifts. These can be as effortless or as detailed as you like: cinnamon stick bundles tied with twine, hand-painted wooden ornaments, or mason jar cocoa mixes layered with care. When hands are busy, hearts tend to open. This rhythm of creating together – laughing, sharing stories, pausing to taste something sweet – nourishes more than just the senses. It reminds us that joy doesn't need to be grand to be meaningful.

You can even turn these simple creations into gifts that carry the warmth of your gathering. Fill small mason jars with layers of cocoa powder, sugar, powdered milk, mini marshmallows, and chocolate chips, tying a ribbon around the lid with a handwritten tag that reads, “Stir into a cup of warmth.” Slip freshly baked cookies into paper or linen bags tied with twine and a sprig of rosemary or dried orange peel for a natural, fragrant touch. Handmade ornaments, stamped or painted with care, become keepsakes of the heart. And if you wrap gifts together, choose simplicity – recycled kraft paper, fabric ribbons, and dried flowers. The beauty lies in the process, not the polish.

Moments like these – simple, unhurried, surrounded by warmth – do more for our mental wellness than we often realize. They soothe the mind, calm the nervous system, and remind us of the human need for connection and creativity. When we share tasks, laughter, and time, we’re not just making gifts; we’re making space – for ourselves and for each other. In these ordinary exchanges, we rediscover extraordinary peace.

The holidays don’t need to be picture-perfect to be meaningful. Sometimes, the greatest gifts come in the form of cocoa-stained aprons, half-wrapped presents, or the soft hum of a familiar song shared among friends. So pour another cup, pass the cookies, and let the evening linger. This is what the season is truly for – presence, connection, and the simple joy of being together.





THE HEALING POWER OF PERSPECTIVE: HOW TRAVEL STRENGTHENS MENTAL HEALTH

Casey Wood | Contributing Writer

There is something about stepping onto a plane, or even into a car bound for somewhere unfamiliar, that changes the way we see the world and ourselves. I have always loved travel, but over the years, I have come to realize it is more than a break from daily life. Travel is therapy in motion. It is one of the few experiences that engages the mind, body, and spirit all at once, and in doing so, it strengthens mental health in ways that are both subtle and profound.

Every trip reminds me that the world is bigger than my daily bubble. I am invited to slow down, to see differently, and to notice how my worries shrink a little when I am standing somewhere new. In the chaos of travel, with its delayed flights, language barriers, and unexpected detours, I am forced to pack my “patient pants” and roll with whatever comes next.

Perspective and Presence

Travel offers something that our modern, fast-paced lives often lack: perspective. When we leave the familiar behind, we gain distance from our routines, roles, and responsibilities. That distance is healthy. It allows the brain to rest and reset; stimulating creativity and promoting cognitive flexibility.

My first real taste of that perspective came in high school and college, when I traveled to Peru for mission work. Those trips were transformative. I saw a way of life completely different from my own, and I learned that joy is not a product of circumstance. Families who had far less than I did radiated a deep contentment rooted in connection and gratitude. That awareness reshaped how I viewed stress, success, and happiness.

Years later, when I studied abroad in Europe, that lesson deepened. I learned to navigate new cities and languages, to rely on instincts, and to find humor in mistakes. I learned that getting lost could lead to discovery, and that flexibility could coexist with purpose. Travel became my most effective mindfulness practice. Every day demanded presence: to the food I ate, the conversations I had, the beauty around me. I realized that mindfulness is not just meditation on a mat. It can happen in motion; while watching the sunrise from a train window, or standing in quiet awe before something ancient and enduring.

Patience, Resilience, and the Unexpected

A lesson that I've needed travel to teach me over and over again is that control is temporary. Plans shift, luggage disappears, and weather changes without warning. For anyone managing anxiety or perfectionism, this can be deeply uncomfortable. But leaning into the unpredictability of travel builds something essential for mental health: resilience.

Each time I adapt to an unexpected challenge, I strengthen emotional regulation, gaining the ability to stay calm, problem-solve, and recover from stress. Those skills don't just make travel easier; they improve life at home. I often remind myself that the calm I find when rerouting after a missed connection is the same calm I need during difficult days at work or at home.

Connection and Community

One of the most powerful aspects of travel is the way it reconnects us to others, and to ourselves. In everyday life, relationships often exist in the margins of busy schedules. We speak in passing, eat in a rush, and postpone meaningful time together. Travel removes those barriers.

Some of my favorite memories are from trips I have taken with friends, my husband, and our daughters. When we travel, we reconnect without the background noise. There is time to talk, to laugh, to explore. We learn about each other in ways that daily life rarely allows. Those moments build closeness and belonging, two of the strongest buffers against mental health struggles.



With my daughters, travel has become one of our greatest teachers. It shows them that people live, speak, and celebrate differently, and that those differences are beautiful. It teaches them patience when flights are delayed, and curiosity about the world beyond their own. They are growing up learning that discomfort is not danger, it is an invitation to grow. I believe that mindset is one of the most powerful tools for lifelong resilience.

Even when I travel alone, connection still finds me. A kind stranger helping with directions, a conversation in a café, these moments are small reminders that humanity is universal.

Discovering the Bigger Self

Somewhere along the way, travel stopped being just about the destinations and became about the person I became in them. Each journey is a mirror reflecting qualities I did not always know I had.

Standing in a mountain village in Peru, wandering through the streets of Florence, or watching the sunset over a Caribbean beach, I have found myself feeling both small and expansive at once. Small because the world is vast and humbling, expansive because I am part of something so much larger than myself.



Returning Home with New Eyes

Coming home after traveling always feels different. There is comfort in returning to what is familiar, but also an awareness that something inside me has shifted. The small frustrations of daily life seem more manageable. Gratitude feels easier, and beauty is found in the ordinary and familiar.

Travel does not erase stress, but it reframes it. It reminds us that struggle is temporary, that solutions exist, and that growth often requires stepping outside what feels safe. When you have seen the world, even just a piece of it, it becomes harder to lose sight of the bigger picture.

That shift is what I carry home each time. Travel leaves me calmer, more patient, and more compassionate. It helps me reconnect with my values and remember that joy can coexist with imperfection.

The Ongoing Journey

In the end, travel is not about checking destinations off a list. It is about collecting moments that remind us how alive we are. It gives us space to breathe, to grow, and to see ourselves with compassion. It helps us heal; not because it fixes our problems, but because it restores our capacity to face them with clarity and grace.

The trip eventually ends, the suitcases get unpacked, and routine returns. But the transformation stays. The world feels a little larger, and so do we.

That is the quiet power of travel for mental health. Not an escape from life, but a deeper return to it.

Stone & Ivy's Contributing Writer, **Casey Wood** is a Top Producing Travel Advisor with **Share the Magic Travel** and has over 15 years of experience in the mental health field. With a heart for people and a passport that rarely gathers dust, she blends her background in mental health with her passion for travel, creating meaningful, joy-filled journeys around the globe.

Casey has explored more than 20 countries and countless U.S. destinations, and she believes that travel is one of the most powerful tools for growth, connection, and healing. She met her husband while studying abroad in college, and they have now been married for nearly fifteen years. Together, they are raising two young daughters who share their parents' love of adventure. Whether traveling as a family or exploring solo, Casey continues to find inspiration in the ways exploration expands the mind and nurtures the soul.



COZY WINTER BUCKET LIST

- HOST A COZY BRUNCH WITH FRIENDS
- MAKE HOMEMADE CINNAMON ROLLS
- DECLUTTER + DONATE WINTER CLOTHES
 - JOURNAL YOUR 2026 INTENTIONS
 - SPEND A DAY OFFLINE
- GO FOR A FROSTY MORNING WALK
 - BAKE BREAD FROM SCRATCH
 - CREATE A COZY READING NOOK
 - TRY A NEW WARM DRINK RECIPE
 - WRITE A GRATITUDE LETTER
 - VISIT A LOCAL HOLIDAY MARKET
- WATCH A COMFORT MOVIE MARATHON
- HAVE A SELF-CARE SPA DAY AT HOME
 - PLAN YOUR 2026 VISION BOARD
 - TAKE PHOTOS IN NATURE
- HAVE A SNOW DAY (OR COZY DAY IN)
 - MAKE A SLOW-COOKER SOUP
 - TRY A NEW WINTER HOBBY
- WRITE AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE SEASON
 - MAKE S'MORES INDOORS
 - COZY UP WITH A BOOK AND TEA
 - PRACTICE MORNING JOURNALING
- REFLECT ON YOUR WINS OF THE YEAR
 - TRY A DIGITAL DETOX WEEKEND
 - CELEBRATE SMALL JOYS DAILY





PROTECTING YOUR PEACE

*SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON*

John Poli, LMHC | Contributing Writer

For many, the holiday season begins long before December. As the season approaches, the excitement and anticipation can quickly turn into stress and exhaustion. Between family gatherings, parties, gift exchanges, and endless to-do lists, it's easy to feel like you have to say "yes" to everything and everyone. But maintaining healthy boundaries during the holidays is essential to preserving your joy and peace of mind. Protecting your peace is not only allowed – it's essential.

Setting healthy boundaries allows the holidays to feel like a season of abundance rather than exhaustion. One of the most powerful gifts you can give yourself is permission to not overextend. You don't have to invite every family member, friend, or coworker to your home. Smaller, more meaningful gatherings often allow for deeper connection and less chaos. The same applies to invitations you receive—just because someone asks doesn't mean you must attend. It's perfectly acceptable to say "thank you for thinking of me, but I can't make it this time." Declining with grace is an act of self-preservation, not selfishness.

The holiday season stretches over several weeks, and burnout can creep in long before Christmas if you're not careful. Schedule downtime the same way you would schedule an event. Use it to rest, reflect, or simply enjoy quiet moments. Remember, the holidays are meant to be a celebration of connection, gratitude, and peace—not a marathon of obligations.

When you honor your boundaries, you not only protect your own wellbeing, but you also model balance for people around you. This year, let the season be gentle. Choose what nourishes you and give yourself permission to create a season that feels calm, balanced, and genuinely joyful.

Here are a few simple, mindful practices to help you savor the season – not just during the holidays, but anytime you seek grounding and presence:

Morning gratitude journaling – Write down three things you're grateful for before the day begins.

Mindful decorating – Slow down and savor each ornament or decoration as you put it up.

Candle meditation – Sit in a dimly lit room and focus on the gentle flicker of a candle flame.

Mindful star-gazing – Spend a few minutes looking at the night sky and simply breathing.

Present-moment listening – When talking with loved ones, focus fully on their voice, expression, and presence.

Mindful gift wrapping – Turn wrapping presents into a sensory ritual – feel the textures, enjoy the sounds of paper, tie ribbons slowly.

Mindful music listening – Sit and truly listen to one holiday song without multitasking.

Slow breathing breaks – Throughout the day, pause for three deep, conscious breaths.

End-of-day reflection – Write or think about one meaningful moment from your day.

Mindful baking – Engage all senses as you bake, noticing smells, textures, and colors.



Stone & Ivy's contributing writer, **John Poli**, has 20+ years of experience working with adults of all ages experiencing minor or major concerns/changes in their lives. John also has extensive experience working with both individuals with a substance use disorder and individuals who have been impacted by a family member or loved one with a substance use disorder. www.helloalma.com/providers/john-poli



WINTER HARVEST SOUP WITH THYME & WHITE BEANS

A simple, soulful bowl for cold winter evenings.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2–3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled & diced
- 1 small parsnip, chopped (optional)
- 1 can white beans, drained & rinsed
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 cup water, as needed
- 1 tsp fresh thyme (½ tsp dried)
- 1 bay leaf
- Sea salt & cracked pepper
- 1 handful spinach or kale
- ½ cup heavy cream or coconut milk
- Fresh thyme, for garnish
- Warm bread, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm the aromatics.

Heat olive oil in a large pot. Sauté onion until soft, then stir in garlic until fragrant.

2. Build the base.

Add potatoes and parsnip. Season with salt, pepper, thyme, and add the bay leaf.

3. Add beans & broth.

Pour in the broth and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook 20–25 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.

4. Blend for creaminess.

Remove bay leaf. Blend one-third of the soup with an immersion blender (or blend 2 cups and return to the pot).

5. Finish gently.

Stir in spinach or kale until just wilted. Add cream or coconut milk for added richness. Adjust seasoning.

6. Serve with intention.

Ladle into bowls, garnish with fresh thyme, and pair with warm crusty bread.



ROSEMARY & SEASALT FLATBREAD



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 2 tsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm water
- 1 tsp honey (optional)
- Flaky sea salt, for finishing
- Extra olive oil, for brushing

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix the dough.

In a medium bowl, whisk flour, sea salt, and rosemary. Add 2 tbsp olive oil, warm water, and honey. Stir until a soft, shaggy dough forms.

2. Knead gently.

Transfer dough to a floured surface and knead 2–3 minutes until smooth. Rest 10–15 minutes if time allows.

3. Roll it out.

Divide into 2–4 pieces. Roll each piece thinly, letting the edges stay rustic.

4. Cook or bake.

STOVETOP (chewy, crisp edges):

Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Cook 2–3 minutes per side until golden and lightly blistered.

OVEN (crisp, rustic):

Preheat to 425°F (220°C). Brush flatbreads with olive oil and bake 10–13 minutes until lightly browned.

5. Finish with flair.

Brush warm flatbreads with olive oil and sprinkle with flaky sea salt and extra rosemary.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

- Serve alongside a cozy winter soup
- Pair with olives, soft cheeses, and roasted grapes
- Use as a base for simple artisan flatbread pizzas
- Break into pieces for grazing boards



HOSTING WITH INTENTION

A celebration of mindful hosting – where simple moments, soft laughter, and quiet connection become the centerpieces of the evening.

Jen Timothy | Writer

There is something sacred about opening your home to others – especially during the holiday season. Not because the glasses match, or the table is perfect, or the background music sounds curated. The true magic of hosting is much quieter than that. It's found in the moments we create, the presence we offer, and the warmth that lingers long after the last coat leaves the rack.

Hosting with intention means approaching your gathering not as a performance, but as an extension of your heart. It asks you to let go of perfection and hold space instead – space for laughter, for comfort, for connection, and for the gentle truth that holidays are tender for many. When we host intentionally, we transform an evening into a memory, and a table into a place of belonging.

Start with meaning, not menu. Before the first candle is lit or the first dish is prepared, consider what you most hope your guests feel: welcomed, relaxed, cared for, celebrated. Let that guide everything else. A warm blanket on the couch, a soft song playing in the background, a handwritten note by each seat – these small gestures speak louder than any centerpiece ever could. They remind guests that they matter, that they were thought of, that your home is a place where they can exhale.

Introduce moments of playfulness. Allow space for lightness – a spontaneous cookie-decorating station, a nostalgic movie playing softly in the background, or a simple board game that invites laughter instead of competition. Joy doesn't need grand gestures; it thrives in the simple, unscripted moments we allow to unfold. When the energy is relaxed, others feel permission to let their guard down and simply be themselves.

And while gatherings are often joyful, they also carry the quiet weight of what's missing. Many people arrive carrying invisible stories – grief from an empty chair at the table, exhaustion from a difficult year, or the ache of someone who's no longer here. Hosting intentionally means noticing gently, without prying. Offer a soft blanket, an extra seat, a warm drink. Acknowledge with kindness if someone shares their heart. Sometimes the most meaningful gift a host can offer is presence – steady, compassionate, and without expectation.

Let your home ooze warmth and comfort, not perfection. A candle burning low, soup simmering gently, mismatched mugs filled with something warm – these are the moments that make a gathering feel honest and human. When hosts are relaxed, guests mirror that ease. When you release the pressure to impress, you create room for genuine connection.



At the end of the evening, what people remember is never the spotless kitchen or the flawless menu. They remember how they felt – safe, welcomed, included, and seen. Hosting with intentions turns a simple night into something meaningful. It turns hospitality into nourishment. It reminds us that being together – really, truly together – is one of the greatest gifts of the season. So this year, host with heart. Keep it simple. Keep it warm. Keep it real.

Let your presence set the tone, let your kindness fill the room, and let your home be a place where joy is felt, comfort is shared, and everyone leaves a little lighter than when they arrived.

Here's to hosting with heart – gently, intentionally, and in ways that make everyone feel at home.



HOLIDAY VIBES

A SEASON OF GENTLE ABUNDANCES

Let this be the music that fills the in-between moments – while the kettle sings, while hands are busy wrapping, while hearts slow down. The season's true rhythm isn't found in noise, but in the quiet harmonies that remind us: *less is more, and more is right here.*

1. David Gray - *This Year's Love*
2. Kelly Clarkson - *The Trouble With Love Is*
3. U2 - *Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)*
4. Michael Buble - *Winter Wonderland*
5. John Mayer - *Slow Dancing in a Burning Room*
6. Dido - *Here With Me*
7. Dean Snowfield - *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*
8. Yo-Yo Ma, Alison Krauss - *Simple Gifts*
9. Josh Groban, Tony Bennett - *Christmas Time is Here*
10. Eve Cassidy - *Songbird*
11. A. Neville - *Please Come Home for Christmas*
12. B.B. King - *Merry Christmas Baby*
13. Dave Matthews - *Oh*
14. Michael Miles - *Snowlight*
15. Harry Connick, Jr. - *A Wink and a Smile*
16. Bing Crosby - *Mele Kalikimaka*
17. The Beach Boys - *God Only Knows*
18. Bob Dylan - *Winterlude*
19. Norah Jones - *I'll Be Home For Christmas*
20. Van Morrison - *Someone Like You*
21. Nat King Cole - *The Christmas Song*
22. Andrea von Kampen - *Old Fashioned Holiday*

23. Alex Warren - *Save You a Seat*
24. Sia - *Snowman*
25. Dean Martin - *I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm*
26. Caity Gyorgy - *Perfect Time of Year*
27. Wham! - *Last Christmas*
28. Maggie Rogers - *Alaska*
29. Sam Smith - *The Lighthouse Keeper*
30. Joni Mitchell - *River*
31. Sarah McLachlan - *Song for a Winter's Night*
32. Donny Hathaway - *This Christmas*
33. Jimmy Buffett - *Christmas Island*
34. Sara Bareilles, Ingrid Michaelson - *Winter Song*
35. Niia - *Snowflake*
36. Bing Crosby - *White Christmas*
37. Billie Holiday - *I'll Be Seeing You*
38. Hayden Calnin - *Warm With You*
39. Caitlyn Smith - *Snow Day*
40. Frank Sinatra - *The Christmas Waltz*
41. Andy Williams - *O Holy Night*
42. Ella Fitzgerald - *What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?*

This mix can be found & saved on Spotify: Holiday Mix by JTimothy

25 ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

- Donate food to your local food pantry
- Take supplies to your local animal shelter
- Bring books, art supplies (crayons and coloring books) for children in the hospital
- Put wrapped candy canes on cars with a cheery note
- Make cards for nursing home residents
- Save up change and put in Salvation Army bucket
- Donate to a local nonprofit or favorite charity
- Hand out homemade cookies and water to the homeless (aka: Blessing Bags)
- Volunteer to help someone wrap gifts
- Invite a friend over for dinner
- Donate blankets, canned goods, toiletries to a homeless shelter
- Bake cookies and give them out to people who work for the community
- Send cards/care packages to military
- Pick up someone else's tab at a restaurant
- Donate to a giving tree or angel tree
- Leave a thank you note/gift for your mail carrier
- Donate school supplies to a local school
- Bring breakfast in to work
- Buy someone a cup of coffee
- Offer to babysit for a single parent
- Leave a bigger tip than you normally would
- Give a lottery ticket to a stranger
- Call a far away friend
- Leave a positive note somewhere for a stranger to find later
- Set out treats for delivery/UPS/Amazon drivers



PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR

THE GRACE OF NEW BEGINNINGS



Jen Timothy | Writer

The world loves a clean slate. Each January, we meet it with open calendars, hopeful lists, and declarations of change. We chase reinvention like a finish line, believing that a different year will bring a different self. But perhaps what the new year really offers isn't a demand for transformation – it's an invitation to tend.

This season, instead of resolutions that shout, consider intentions that whisper. Instead of setting impossible standards, plant goals that grow with you – slow, patient, and rooted in purpose. There's a quiet pressure that comes with the turning of the year – to do more, become more, achieve more. We begin with bright energy, only to feel dimmed when momentum fades by February. But what if goals didn't require perfection? What if they were meant to unfold rather than be conquered?

Goals, when nurtured gently, are less about arrival and more about alignment. They are daily acts of mindfulness – a journal entry, a morning walk, a glass of water, a moment of stillness before beginning the day. They are reminders of who we are becoming, not rules to prove our worth. Let this year be one where your aspirations are steady companions, not heavy burdens.

There is a difference between a resolution and an intention. Resolutions often focus on what we lack – what we must fix or control. Intentions, however, focus on what we choose to invite in. Setting intentions is less about sculpting life into what we want it to be, and more about listening to what life is already asking of us. It's about clarity over control.

When you create goals from this space, they carry patience instead of pressure. They bloom quietly, in their own time. Write them down not as commands, but as promises:

- “I will create space for my mind to rest.”
- “I will move my body out of gratitude, not guilt.”
- “I will speak kindly – to others, and to myself.”

These are not boxes to check, but seeds to tend.

Every meaningful change begins in the smallest of moments – the decisions we make when no one is watching, the thoughts we choose to honor, the grace we extend to ourselves when we stumble. Growth doesn't happen in grand gestures; it unfolds in the quiet repetition of gentle effort. And so, as you prepare for the new year, approach your goals as you would a garden – with patience, care, and trust in timing. The seasons always return, and so will you.

The new year is not a deadline. It's a doorway – one that opens slowly, with light seeping through in its own time. It carries the promise of renewal: new ideas waiting to be born, new dreams ready to take shape, new ways of being that feel more like home. In stepping through this threshold, leave behind the noise of expectation and step into the quiet rhythm of becoming. Let grace be your guide – gentle, forgiving, and ever-present.

Because you are not a resolution to be fixed; you are a life to be nurtured. And this – this fresh, unwritten year – is your invitation to do just that.



Five Gentle Practices for Entering the New Year

1. Begin with Stillness.

Before setting any goals, take a moment to pause. Brew tea, light a candle, and reflect on what the past year has taught you. Let silence guide your clarity.

2. Choose One Word.

Rather than a list of resolutions, select a single word – peace, courage, renewal, grace. Let it serve as your compass throughout the months ahead.

3. Create Space, Not Pressure.

Dedicate time each week to rest, read, or walk without agenda. Productivity is not the only form of progress.

4. Reflect Instead of React.

When setbacks come – as they always do – respond with curiosity, not criticism. Ask what this moment is trying to teach you, rather than what it's taking from you.

5. Celebrate the Subtle.

Mark the small victories: mornings you rose gently, days you practiced kindness, moments you breathed before speaking. Quiet growth is still growth.

May
you never
be too old
to search the
skies on
Christmas
eve





From All of Us at Stone & Ivy

As the year draws to a close, we extend our heartfelt wishes for a holiday season filled with calm, connection, and quiet joy. May you find peace in the simple moments – a steaming mug of cocoa, a handwritten note, the sound of laughter shared across a table. May you give and receive with intention, choosing presence over perfection, kindness over chaos.

Let this season be a gentle reminder that true abundance is found not in what we acquire, but in how we love, listen, and show up for one another. Breathe deeply, move slowly, and savor the small things – they are the ones that last.

*From our hearts to yours, we wish you a happy, healthy, and grace-filled holiday season.
May the new year meet you with light, purpose, and peace.*

