



## Happy Holidays

December/January 2022

Buying something special and giving it to someone we deeply care about can be a very satisfying thing to do. However, something that may be even more meaningful and needed is the gift of presence. Offering others our quality time, undivided attention and acts of kindness is an investment that is memorable and heart-centered.



Rather than this season being all about giving presents, gifting presence creates relationship depth, nurtures goodwill, and connects us with shared deeper values. Here are ways to be offer more presence this holiday season:

### Presence for Ourselves

In order to be present with others, we need to take care of ourselves. This might begin by us getting adequate sleep, reducing stress, and eating well. The idea is to give ourselves permission to take time out and focus on what we need.

1. Enjoy quiet moments wherever you feel at peace...in nature, alone or in the company of others.
2. Exercise when you can, stay rested and get enough sleep.
3. Avoid overindulgence in holiday food, alcohol and caffeine.

Resist the temptation to fill the natural spaces in your daily schedule and instead, let them fill you. What is something you can give to yourself that would make you feel more at peace and healthier?



### Presence for Others

If you don't have a holiday tradition, perhaps start one now - we might host gatherings with a seasonal theme, offer a meal to others, join our children in a community based volunteer opportunity, take a special day trip or spend time outdoors.

Establish a new tradition that reacquaints us (and our families) on how to give, how to share and how to make a positive difference in the lives of others by giving gifts of the heart.

Consider making time to "talk first and tech later" – putting aside our social media and technology connections for part of a day or even longer. To join with others or commit to ourselves to try and be fully available to the person right in front of us. To remain present body, mind and heart-filled spirit. To listen and laugh and play. To be kind and understanding of each person we meet, each person we live with and those we see walking on the street.

## Presence for our Community

Being generous and contributing with kindness, respectfulness, understanding and time are all ways to be present in the communities to which we belong. This includes the places we work, play, go to school, shop, volunteer, spend time online, or interact with others.

We might encourage our children to look beyond their own holiday wish lists. Ask them to choose a toy or book to donate to a children's charity or have them help you choose groceries and deliver them to the local food bank. Participate in seasonal fund raising activities and dinners that provide benefit to local service programs and projects. Take time to enjoy your community all dressed up in its "seasonal best"! Shop, eat, play, take walks and interact with others locally.

Take steps to make this holiday truly a time of meaning, peace and joy for you.

## Be realistic

It is common to try to cram too many events and too much activity into two or three days, in a vain attempt to keep "everyone" happy and get everything done.

Take steps to minimize the distance you plan to travel. Stay in control of your diet portions, avoid the trap of eating whatever you want now because you will work it all off later - because that rarely happens. We tend to eat more (especially salt, fat and sugar) when we feel stressed, – so, try to remember this. Take responsibility for the amount of alcohol you drink, and, don't drink/drug and drive.

## Respecting ourselves

What does self-respect have to do with the holidays? Self-respect is about boundaries and saying "no" can define them. No! I will not drive like a rally-cross driver all over BC visiting every relative from Port Alice to Abbotsford just to keep everyone happy. No! I will not spend more than I can afford just to avoid offending others. No! I will not have another drink for the road. No! I will not eat the last of the turkey/stuffing/pumpkin pie so it does not go to waste. I could go on but hopefully you get the message.

This year let your holidays be everything you want it to be, and if that includes peace, happiness, relaxation and laughter – go for it! It is okay to still have money in your purse/wallet when January 2022 rolls around and a little in your bank account too!

Be realistic about your goals and plans for 2022. Be gentle and kind with yourself. Yes, walk more. Sleep more. Drink less alcohol and drink more water, eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and less salt, fat and sugar. Find or rediscover a hobby that helps you to relax and that brings you a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Spend more quality time with your partner and the kids, and if you have neither one nor the other – make a new friend. Abe Lincoln once said, "If you want a friend, be a friend".

And one last thing: if you have difficulty with any of the things covered in this newsletter and could use some help give your friends at Vancouver Island Counselling Service a call – we are here to help!



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