Theresa Babbs-Durrant

MENTAL HEALTH COACH & THERAPIST

Getting Through the Holiday Season

A gentle guide for family pressure, grief and loneliness

Before you begin

Holiday seasons can bring joy, and it can also bring pressure, tension, grief and loneliness, sometimes all at once. This guide offers permission and practical ideas, not a list of things you should do. It is general information and reflection only. Take what helps and leave the rest.

This resource is for personal reflection and general information only. It is not a diagnostic tool, a clinical assessment or a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis or treatment, and it cannot tell you whether you have a mental health condition. Your answers stay with you. They are not collected or reviewed by me. This resource is for adults (18+).

Part 1: Naming the season

What I think this time of year 'should" be	What it's actually like for me

One expectation I could let go of this year:

Part 2: If it's family

Old dynamics can come back within hours of arriving. It can help to know your pattern and plan for it.

The role I tend to slip into:

What I can do to reduce the pressure (tick all that apply):

- ☐ A walk on my own
- ☐ A planned finish time
- ☐ A friend on the end of a text
- ☐ A quiet room
- ☐ A break from alcohol or noise
- ☐ Time to recover afterwards

A line I can use for a predictable trigger

- "I'm not going to discuss that today."
- "I'll think about it and come back to you."
- "I'm going to get some air. Back in ten minutes."

One thing I'll do differently, and one thing I'll let be as it always is:

Theresa Babbs-Durrant

Getting Through the Holiday Season

Part 3: If it's grief

Seasonal holidays are full of rituals, and rituals are tied to people. If someone is missing from the table, it can feel louder at this time of year. There is no right way to do it. Some people want to speak their person's name aloud, light a candle, cook their favourite meal or visit a favourite place. Others need to keep the day small and avoid reminders. Both are legitimate. You can also change plans on the day.

Keep	Adapt	Pause

A small way I could include the person I'm missing:

What I'd like people around me to know:

Anniversaries and “firsts” can carry extra weight. Grief doesn't follow the calendar, and the new year doesn't close it.

Part 4: If it's lonely

Loneliness can be sharpest when everyone seems to be together. Small moments of connection can help, and they don't need to be big.

- [ ] Send one message to someone
- [ ] Plan one thing to look forward to
- [ ] Call someone I haven't spoken to for a while
- [ ] Go for a walk and say hello to one person
- [ ] Join an online or local community event
- [ ] Do something kind for someone else

Part 5: Lowering the bar

It doesn't have to be perfect to be good enough. You're allowed to spend less, do less, say no, leave early, skip a tradition that no longer fits, or let it be an ordinary day.

Three things I'm giving myself permission to skip this year:

Theresa Babbs-Durrant

MENTAL HEALTH COACH & THERAPIST

Getting Through the Holiday Season

Part 6: A gentle plan for the day

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

One thing just for me:

Part 7: Quick resets

- Slow breathing: in for four, out for six, for a few minutes.
- Grounding: name five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell and one you can taste.
- A change of room, a glass of water, or a few minutes outside.

If you need support now

- In an emergency, or if you feel you can't keep yourself safe: call 999.
- Samaritans (free, 24 hours): 116 123.
- Shout (free text support, 24 hours): text SHOUT to 85258.
- Northern Ireland: Lifeline (free, 24 hours): 0808 808 8000.
- If a relationship feels unsafe: National Domestic Abuse Helpline (England) 0808 2000 247, 24 hours. Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline (Northern Ireland) 0808 802 1414, 24 hours. In Scotland and Wales, please search for your national domestic abuse helpline.

Worried about your health? Speak to your GP. Out of hours, call NHS 111 in England, Scotland or Wales. In Northern Ireland, your GP surgery will direct you to the out-of-hours service.

If you'd like to talk it through

If something here resonated and you'd like help making sense of it, I'd be glad to hear from you. You are welcome to book a free, no-obligation consultation. There's no pressure to, and nothing in this resource needs to be shared with me.

Providing Counselling Services in Windermere, and online across the UK

www.theresababbsdurrant.com

cumbriatherapist@gmail.com