



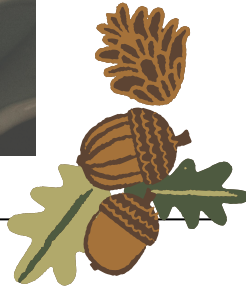
OBSIDIAN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

# OBSIDIAN QUARTERLY



*Issue no.03*

MANAGING HOLIDAY STRESS



## TIME MANAGEMENT DURING THE HOLIDAYS (MAKING TIME FOR SELF-CARE)

The holidays are a busy time, between holiday shopping, traveling and even prepping a meal, there isn't a ton of 'me-time' available.

We highly recommend scheduling your self-care time. You can leave early to go home for a bubble bath, or you give someone else the dessert responsibility so you can take time to meditate for a few minutes or a quick nap.



## MANAGING STRESS AROUND FAMILY

Family can be stressful, and the holidays add to that stress. It is important to set boundaries and have a 'emergency plan' when approaching the holidays with difficult family. Make sure you know your boundaries before joining holiday gatherings, and have a plan if you end up getting stressed. Sometimes its a few minutes breathing in the bathroom, or going to take a walk. Whatever it is, plan it BEFORE you attend a holiday gathering this season.



## IT'S OKAY TO STAY HOME

The holidays are often focused around family and friends, and for some people, that can also mean stress. Some people have difficulty tolerating their family, and that's okay. You do not have to attending any holiday gathering. You don't like that Aunt Marie talks about her dogs too much? Or that your husband's boss Rob shares far too much about his political views? No matter the reason, if the stress and anxiety about attending a holiday event is too much, staying home may be a better option for you and your mental health.



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## HOLIDAY STRESS: HOW TO GET OFF THE FAMILY DRAMA TRAIN

By Jenna Froelich, LCPC, CDVP

Holidays are often touted as “the most wonderful time of the year,” but for anyone who has stressful families (and let’s be honest, every family has at least one of “those” relatives), it’s actually the worst. And that’s such a shame! Holidays can be a great time to see people we love, enjoy good food and connect with important traditions.

The good news is that there are ways to minimize how much your family’s drama torpedoes Thanksgiving dinner. There’s no one-size-fits-all formula and you may not be able to control what your drunk uncles, rude siblings or gossiping in-laws do, but you can at least practice reducing your involvement in the drama spiral.

### Tips & Tricks for Reducing Involvement in Family Drama

1) Anticipate the drama spirals and who/what usually sets them off. Maybe you know Uncle Walter always starts sharing his questionable political beliefs after the second beer or that your mom always has something mean to say about your cooking. If you know that, you can pre-emptively plan ways to avoid the drama (see examples below!).

2) Preplan good excuses to excuse yourself! If Cousin Linda is rant-raving about how horrible her sister’s husband is, consider a quick, “That sounds so rough!” and then follow it up with, “So sorry, but I need to run to the bathroom/grab another drink/etc.!” Diversions like these mean you can sometimes fade into the crowd (and maybe keep avoiding Linda).

3) Have an escape plan. This could mean coordinating with a healthy person to carpool (or even driving yourself) so you can leave or at least take a quick drive if things get too crazy.

If you’re hosting, identify a part of the house or “errand” you can go run if you need a minute to retreat and recharge.

#### 4) Become a “gray rock.”

This refers to responses that are neutral/boring (like a gray rock) to people’s provocative or nosy statements/questions. If your loud-mouthed mother-in-law asks how that colonoscopy went, offer a quick, “Just fine!” and then change the subject (“What’s new with you, Agnes?”) or try #2 above! When you give up very little info, it gives unhealthy people less “shiny,” interesting things to create drama with. This can take a lot of practice, but it can be effective!

### When the Situation is More Complicated

It’s critical to acknowledge that the above suggestions are not an exhaustive list. Family dynamics are VERY tricky and it can take a lot of trial and error to find the best strategy to cope. If your situation feels

more complicated or you could just use extra support in learning new ways to deal with complicated

people, it could help to work with a trauma-informed or domestic violence-trained counselor--they can provide you with more individualized support to make the trial-and-error process less overwhelming.

Consider reaching out to Obsidian Behavioral Health at 630-296-4169 or check out our website at [obsidianbh.com](http://obsidianbh.com) to see if someone on our team might be a good match to offer that support!

### Your Therapists' Holiday Favorites

**Lindsey** – Holiday lights & cookies

**Silvia** – The Christmas tree and traditional Guatemalan and Puerto Rican food

**Jenna** – Time off

**Katey** – Decorating the house and listening to Christmas music

**Danielle** – Holiday food and time off

**Jenny** – Watching Christmas movies with only the lights from the Christmas tree on

**Maggie** – Taking trips to warmer weather to visit family



## Hotline Support

As many of you know, the holidays can bring a myriad of emotions to the table. At Obsidian we want to ensure you are supported during this time. Please reach out to your therapist to schedule a session before they are on holiday. If you find yourself in a crisis outside session, we have included hotline numbers below.

General Crisis/Suicide Services: “988” or text “HOPE” to 741-741  
<http://988lifeline.org/>

Trevor Project Hotline: 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678.  
<http://www.lgbthotline.org/>

Trans Lifeline (877) 565-8860



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## The 478 Method

The 478 Method is a breathing technique used to calm down the sympathetic nervous system (this is who is in control of your ‘fight or flight’ response). By using the 478 method, you can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is used to relax the sympathetic nervous system.

Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds (go at your pace).

Hold that breath for 7 seconds.

Exhale through the mouth (tip of your tongue touching the back of your two front teeth), creating a “whooshing” sound, for 8 seconds.

Repeat for 3 more cycles (total of 4 breaths with 478)

