

Guidance Guide

What's your Emotional Destination this Holiday Season?

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- Do you find yourself psychologically congested this time of year?
- Do you get stuck in family and social traffic?
- Do you tend to ignore the obvious stress landmarks?
- Do you find your energetic vehicle running on empty well before you reach your destination?

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, you are not alone. We are living in this amazing time of growth. We are witnessing technological advances that are connecting our global world. It makes life easier and more complicated at the same time. We are constantly bombarded with information and plugging in is now officially a cultural expectation. As a result, it can be difficult to feel calm, centered and clear, especially during the busy holiday season.

Holiday stress can be further compounded by family dynamics. Modern day families have never been more diversified. We have single parent households, step families, families that are ethnically and spiritually diverse, elderly parents living with us or far away, etc. etc. etc.

There are so many gifts that come along with our modern day world. However, we are also being called forth to navigate uncharted waters as we learn how to manage all the choices. Life can certainly feel like it is happening "at us" and it is easy to lose touch with our own personal core values.

As many of you have heard me say before, despite feeling like life is out of control, you always have

choices. Perhaps your choices aren't always appetizing, but you always, I repeat, have choices. Bad things will still happen. It is part of the human experience. But one can choose how to respond if we are mindful. This in itself can be empowering if you can remember this throughout your day, especially throughout the holiday season. One way to remember this concept of choice is take some reflective time and begin to design your life by creating goals/intentions.

This year, I am giving you full permission to design the holiday of your dreams. You get to choose how you want to experience your holidays this year. It's not an easy task. It can be fun and yet it can also pose some personal challenges. Like saying "no" to certain dreaded holiday traditions because they no longer serve you or your family. In this life coaching exercise I will start you off by dreaming big. And then I will have you start chunking things down and making things realistic and concrete. You may want to purchase a journal or invite a friend/partner (to support you and hold you accountable) to join you in exploring this exercise.

Visualize your dream holiday. Where do you want to be? Who do you want to be with? How do you want to be? If you are spiritual, what would that look like? Don't hold yourself back! If money or relationships are an issue, pretend they aren't. Anything that might be holding you back is no longer an issue in this exercise. Step out of your

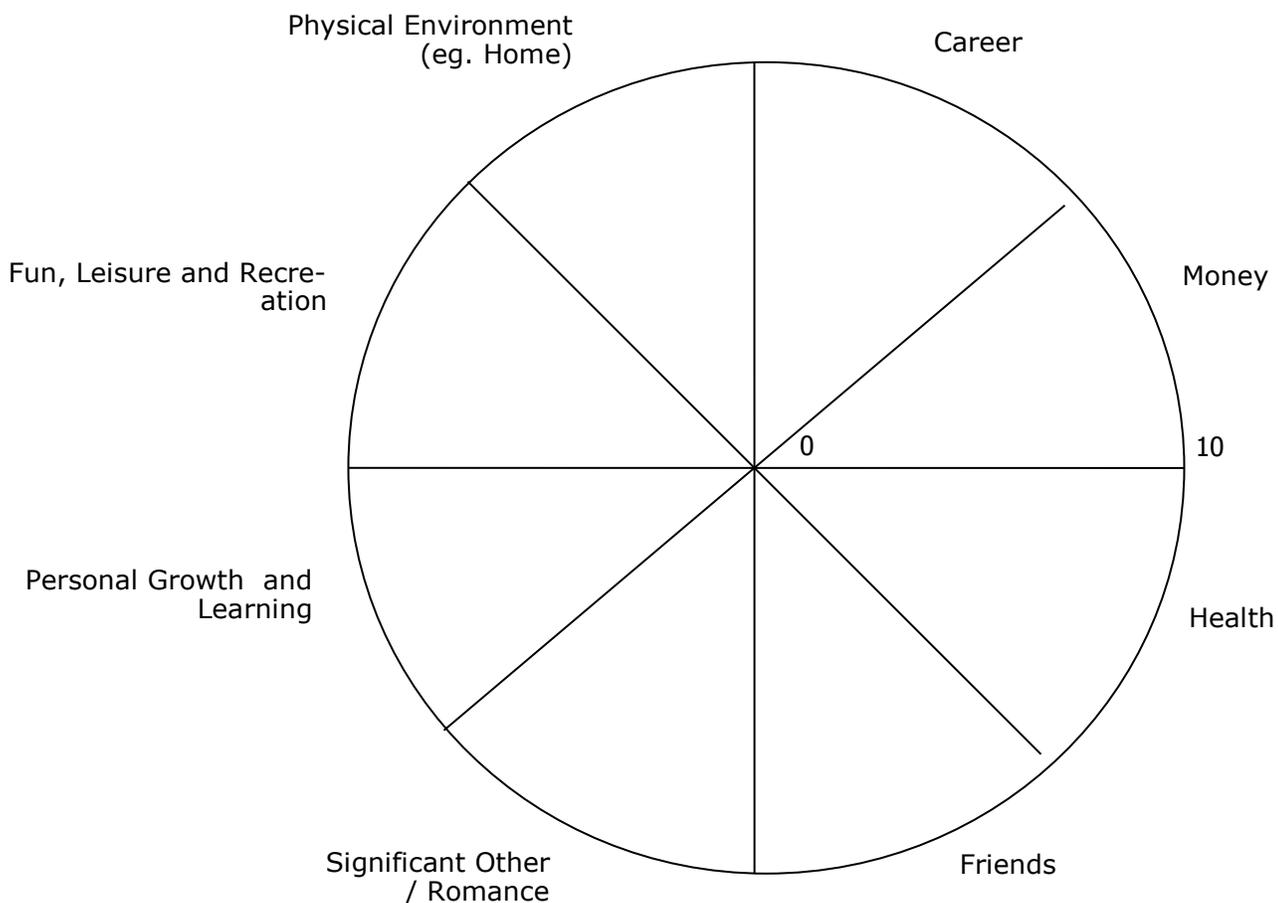
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realistic or pragmatic self and allow yourself to play. As Albert Einstein once said, "Imagination is the preview of what's to come." I notice that most of my clients will hold back when I encourage them to dream, to fantasize and to imagine. Some of my client's will say, "what's the point, it isn't going to happen anyway." Giving yourself permission to dream starts lubricating the wheels that have been stuck on your personal train. Your dreams start pointing you in the direction of your core self, your life purpose and your passions. Yes, you might not make it to Greece this holiday season, but what is it about Greece that really gets you excited? Does it point to your core values around travel, diversity, warmth, slowing down?

Because the holidays are upon us and it might not be realistic right now to get a massage every day from now until New Year eve or go to Greece. Let's move in to creating a holiday that is fulfilling, realistic and can incorporate elements of your dream holiday.

Refer to the diagram of the wheel of life. Look at every wedge and ask yourself, "Complete fulfillment this holiday season in this area would look like....." For example, complete fulfillment in health this holiday season would be feeling energized, healthy, fit and grounded. Complete fulfillment with significant other/romance would be feeling connected, romantic and fun. Now, the next step is to take this deeper. What does it mean to you to be energized, healthy, fit and grounded? What does that look like to you? For example, "I know I am energized when I don't feel like going to bed at 7pm. I know I am energized when I get up in the morning alert and refreshed. Healthy might mean mindful eating, regular exercise and moderate drinking. Fun with my partner means a silly night of bowling, getting a sitter and hitting the town, reading a book side by side by the fire. The list is endless.

Set your holiday goals. Be as specific and concrete as you can. For example, in the health area, "I will



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work out four times a week at the gym, I will engage in mindful eating/drinking and use a food journal to hold me accountable from December 1st to January 10th, I will sleep eight hours a night and take my vitamins daily. I will take quiet time every morning for fifteen minutes to help me stay grounded.” In the area of family this holiday season I will set up specific dates with my children so we can enjoy one another without distractions, I will write a letter to my kids outlining all the things I love and appreciate about them, I will set up a date on the phone with my siblings who aren’t local so we can spend some time connecting over the holidays, I will set healthy boundaries with family members who are challenging and leave difficult gatherings at a predetermined time, etc. etc. In the realm of personal growth.....I will spend the 15 minutes of quiet time in the morning reflecting about what the holidays mean to me or read uplifting material, I will ask for help at least three times a day, I will give myself permission to transition from one activity to another with 5 to ten minute breaks so I can stay centered. If your dream holiday involves Greece or travel, I will have a night at home that features Greek food (or food representing your travel destination), Greek music and dancing. If your dream was to get daily massages....I will make an appointment for a massage in January or I will designate a jar in the house for a massage savings account. The list is endless. Have fun. Be creative. And design away.

Revisit your goals every morning and practice compassion. There will be things that get in your way of your ideal holiday, your special design. You will most definitely be called forth for a redesign. I am not a believer in living a balanced life, especially with kids. I think that is pretty much impossible. However we can learn how to harmonize. The key is to not get disillusioned when things go wrong or you get off track. It is important to be gentle with yourself. And if you are partnering with someone, ask for support. Do what you need to do to get re-centered and return to your goals/intentions with compassion. And to ask the never ending question.....what am I learning about myself.

May this holiday season be filled with peace, joy, love and mindfulness. As always, feel free to contact me with questions, comment or concerns.

Erie Day School Motto

May I live each day being mindful of the goodness that surrounds me.

May I always stretch my mind and heart so that I live my life in wisdom and love.

May I be a loyal friend to others and willingly help those in need, and may I always honor and respect the earth of which I am a part.



Erie Day School

Learning today, leading tomorrow.

Erie Day School
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If you have any questions, comments or additions to the *Guidance Guide*, or know someone that should be included on the email distribution list, please contact Allison Parr-Plasha at 814-452-4273 or via email at aplasha@eriedayschool.com

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