



STRESSFUL

# **The Most ~~Wonderful~~ Time of the Year:**

How to Survive the  
Holidays with Your Family

Hallmark movies have taught us that you can have a meet-cute with a handsome stranger, fall in love and get married in the span of two weeks, bosses are horrible people that make you work all the time and holidays are for spending time with family. The first two don't hold up so well in real life, but the last one is certainly true. Most holiday celebrations involve spending time with your family – for better or worse.

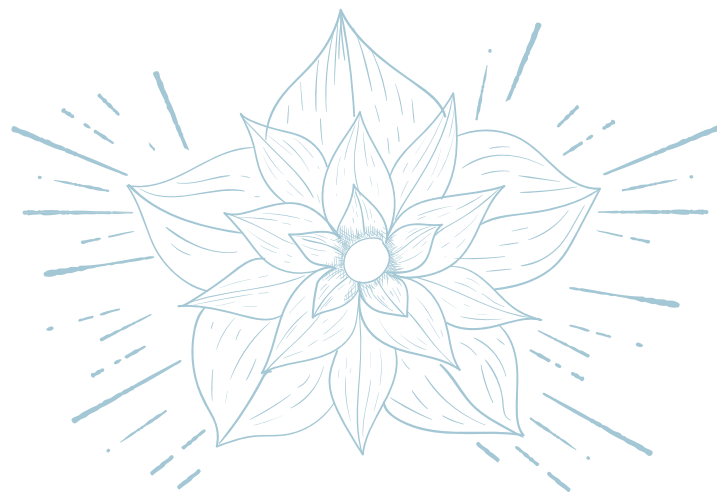
Now, many of you may love your family and you can't wait to open presents around a roaring fire. This ebook is not for you. If spending time with your family stresses you out and makes you anxious in anticipation of awkward questions and even more awkward silences, then this ebook is your survival guide.

Maybe you have a cousin that can't wait to talk about his very divergent political beliefs. Or your aunt keeps asking when you're going to settle down already, or your mom takes you on a continual guilt trip about how you don't call enough. Families can be stressful. They know all the right places to push your buttons – and often relish in doing just that, because what else are you going to do in that small town where you grew up on a day when everything closes? "Oh, I know, let's ask Jimmy why he hasn't gotten that promotion he said was in the bag."

No matter your particular case of family drama, you could use some help. We've put together a few essential tips to surviving your family during the holiday season, because life isn't a Hallmark movie (except that one where *Tori Spelling* is visited by ghosts and learns who her true love is, of course).

Whether you're headed home for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or Festivus – as long as there's an annoying family member ready to ask why you aren't doing more to help -- we've got you covered.

# Chapter One: Eat



Food is front and center at most holiday celebrations and can make your holidays much more joyful. For some, this can mean hours in the kitchen, decorating the perfect sugar cookies with your loved ones, laughing over that time when you were five and your cookies all looked phallic. Christmas music plays in the background, while hot apple cider simmers on the stovetop.

For others, it's stress eating the chocolate bar you were able to snag at the gas station when you were running out to "pick up that thing you said you needed that time."

The key is finding a happy medium. Don't go for the junk – save your stress calories for the good stuff. Then, you can quietly eat, and pretend you are just savoring every morsel because it is so delicious. To maintain low drama levels, be sure to take a heaping spoonful of whatever your mom/grandmother/uncle brings every year and claims it wouldn't be the holidays without.

Food also provides a welcome relief from answering questions: If your great-aunt Milred asks what happened to that nice girl you brought last year, you can stuff your face with mashed potatoes and claim to be politely chewing with your mouth closed while you think of a suitable answer.

Food can also be a pitfall, so be careful. If your dad is likely not-so-quietly ask you if you're sure you want that second helping of cheesecake because aren't those jeans getting a little tight, it's best to wake up in the middle of the night to eat your feelings.



## Rum Cake

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This cake is moist, sweet, coated in rum, and can pass off as breakfast. So, basically rum for breakfast. The perfect addition to your family's holiday gathering.

1 box golden yellow butter cake	1/2 cup oil
1 box instant vanilla pudding mix	1/2 cup rum
4 eggs	Walnuts or pecans, chopped
1/2 cup water	

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour a bundt pan. Cover the bottom of the pan with nuts.

Place all ingredients in mixing bowl and beat on medium speed until well-blended. Scrape bowl as needed. Pour into prepared pan. Bake for one hour.

6-8 minutes before the cake is done, heat water, oil and rum in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil and maintain 3-4 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove cake from oven. Leave it in the pan and immediately pour the glaze over cake. Leave cake to cool. When the cake is cooled, flip over onto a plate to remove from pan. Eat.

# Chapter Two: Drink



Getting drunk in front of your family isn't necessarily a good idea, but a cocktail or glass of wine (okay, a couple), can take the edge off any family gathering. Those inappropriate jokes your Cousin Steve are telling are still not funny, but now they aren't cause for World War III. You can smile when your Aunt Suzy (no relation) says you'd really be beautiful if you put on some makeup.

Plus, drinking gives you something to do. You can escape nearly any conversation with an empty glass. It doesn't even have to be yours! Become a decent mixologist, and act as bartender for your gathering. Everyone loves the bartender! Even if you're just refilling Cokes and pouring wine, you have a job and one that is extremely valued. You are contributing.

Remember, don't get drunk. Drunk people say and do stupid things that no one in your family will ever forget, and you'll have to relive every holiday for the rest of your life. Which you'll drink to get through, and then you'll get drunk again and do something else stupid, like trying to put the turkey on your head, and then you've really done it.



## An Old-Fashioned Christmas

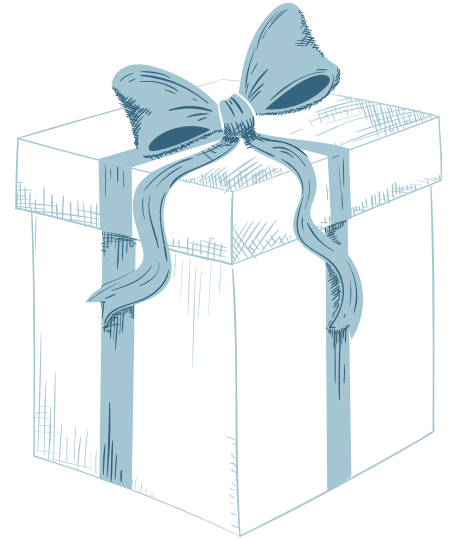
A festive take on the classic Old Fashioned. If you don't have the time or energy to make the cinnamon simple syrup, or don't have an orange handy, just pour bourbon into glass and drink.

2 oz bourbon  
1 tsp cinnamon simple syrup (recipe below)  
2 dashes bitters  
orange peel slice  
cinnamon stick

First, make the cinnamon simple syrup. Bring 1 cup water & three cinnamon sticks to a boil in a small sauce pan. Lower the heat and let simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the cinnamon sticks. Bring the water back to a boil, and add 3/4 c sugar. Stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and allow the syrup to cool before using or storing.

When the syrup is cool enough to use, pour 2 oz of bourbon in to a glass filled with ice. Add 1 tsp cinnamon simple syrup (recipe below). Add 2 dashes of bitters. Stir. Garnish with orange peel & cinnamon stick. Drink.

# Chapter Three: Be Merry



That old saying, “fake it ‘til you make it” rings especially true over the holidays. When in doubt, pretend that you’re having an absolutely amazing time. You may start to believe it, and actually start having a good time. Or, you’ll completely freak out your family because you’re smiling at everything you say. Either way, it’s a win.

If opening presents together is part of your festivities, plaster the exact same smile on your face the whole time. “Thank you, this is lovely!” is fine to say every single time, whether you received a Squatty Potty to help with your “situation” or an Amazon gift card. EVERYTHING IS LOVELY.

To ensure you get the same treatment, consider giving everyone on your list something they simply cannot complain about or react negatively to. Like a donation made in their name to help hungry kids. No one can complain about feeding hungry kids, and if they do, they look like a horrible person. Meanwhile, you get to help kids, skip endless hours at the mall debating which oven mitt your mom would like best and not have to field passive aggressive comments like, “ugh, you should know by now I never wear red.”

If you’ve had enough of your family and don’t want to talk to them for a few months, or if you are the annoying cousin who likes to talk about politics, give the gift of a donation to the opposite political party of their choice. That should do the trick.

## So why spend the holidays with your family at all?

We want to see our families. We love them. But they drive us crazy.

Why do we get so stressed about seeing our family around the holidays? Well, expectations are high. We want the Hallmark movie. Or our childhood holiday, that we remember with a blurry, rose-tinted perspective. We think the food should be perfect, the conversation should be jubilant, and everyone should get along. That’s not reality. Someone is going to burn the gravy, the mashed potatoes are going to be lumpy, and there’s going to be an argument over *something*. Sometimes the holidays remind us what we don’t have – yet. A significant other, a couple of loud kids, the perfect house, a better job, straighter hair, a nicer car – it can all come into sharp focus around our family members and their persistent questioning. Then we get upset, stressed and pick a fight with our brother (it’s kinda fun though, right?).

This holiday, remember everyone is in the same boat, and you probably drive them crazy too. And you don’t live in a Hallmark movie (maybe that one where everything is a dream, but you won’t know until you wake up, so just assume it’s not).

And remember, to survive holidays with your family, you just need to eat, drink, and be merry (even if you have to fake it).

