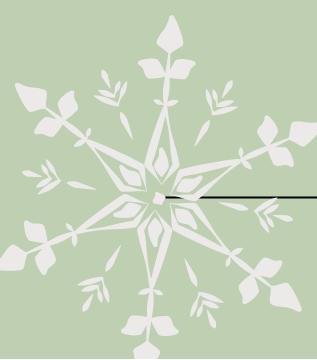


HOLIDAY
THRIVE-GUIDE

Ashley Anne



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WARNING & BOUNDARY PHRASES

Warning Phrases: letting them know you're starting to feel uncomfortable

- This isn't a conversation I feel comfortable continuing if you're going to yell
- I've decided to start enjoying food instead of controlling it, if you'd like to control yours that is your decision to make
- I like my sense of style, please keep your input to yourself
- politics isn't something I feel comfortable discussing, but I'm open to talking about something else we're both interested in
- please ask my child for permission to hug before hugging, I'm teaching them that they have a right to their body and the ability to choose what they feel comfortable with
- I deserve to feel respected and comfortable, that does not mean I'm being difficult
- I'm an adult and am capable and able to make my own choices
- I have a right to respond when I have the time and space to do so
- I have a right to my boundaries

Boundary Phrases: if they continue to do 'x' then you will decide to 'y' in response.

If a boundary of yours is that you're no contact this holiday, and they try to reach out and guilt-trip you or send flying monkeys, you are NOT obligated to respond, so don't

- If you're able to respect my comfort levels, I will come, if not, then that is your choice and I will not be attending
- If you are not able to stop yelling, I'm going to hang up. Okay, since you are still yelling, I am now ending this conversation and we can pick it back up via text another time instead.
- If you continue texting and calling over and over, I will no longer be responding to you.
- If you continue to try to control my food or comment on it, I will choose to not be around you for the rest of the night.
- If you're going to continue to try to make me feel bad about what I wear and what I look like, you're simultaneously giving me permission to stop communicating with you because I will no longer choose to be around you.
- If you are not going to respect my child's right to their own body, and ask permission before hugging, then you will no longer be able to spend one on one time with them from now on.
- If you continue to bulldoze over my comfort levels, I will not be coming.

“NO’S” & TEXT RESPONSES

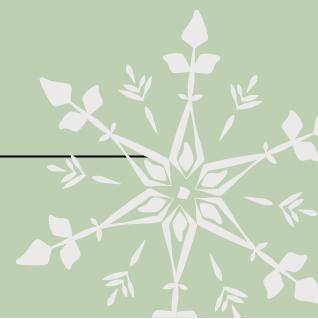


Ideas of how to say “no”: Here are Some Ideas to Help Get Your Ideas Flowin’ too!

- I'll be using the holidays to recharge my battery before the new year and won't be attending events this year, thank you in advance for understanding
- I'm picking up overtime this year at work, and will not be attending events this year (whether you're actually working or not is none of their business)
- I'll be coming for dinner and then heading home afterwards, thank you for respecting that
- I'll be spending the holidays with some friends this year, I appreciate the invite though (even though you're probably like 😞 inside)
- I have a right to take the space I need at this time, thank you in advance for understanding
- I'm gunna opt out this year, I appreciate the invite though
- No thanks, hope you all have a great time together!
- No.

Text Responses: Various texts and responses that might come in handy or help you write your own

- Reminder: you are never obligated to respond to anybody just because they have messaged you. check in with yourself first, and ask yourself if you want to be in conversation with them and if the answer is no, just leave it. not. obligated.
here's another question to ask yourself first: do i feel safe talking to this person right now?
and if the answer is no, just leave it. not. obligated. (:
- I know, I see you've called, I'll give you a call back later.
- Hey, I won't be making it this weekend. Wanted to let you know so you know how much food to make ahead of time. (you owe no further explanation)
- I'll come for an hour or two, and then I'll head out after that. (you owe no further explanation)
- That isn't something I'm excited to participate in, which is okay, I'll just sit this one out.



ANXIETY TIPS (BEFORE, DURING, & AFTER)



Before: Prep is KEY! If you're going to head into a situation that might be anxiety-inducing, prep to make yourself feel as good as you can. Music, podcasts, take a mini-walk around, movement, singing loudly, good scents, eat something that doesn't hurt your tummy, shake it out, wear an outfit that makes you feel good, etc.

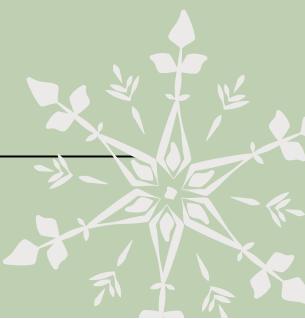
During: Then, when you are IN the moment, bring/do things that calm you a bit. So, bring mint gum to chew, an eraser in your pocket to dig your nails into, rub your thumbs on each other, curl your toes and release them, clear throat to release throat tension, cross your arms and run your thumbs around the backs of your arms in that position to offer self-soothing, sway back and forth, etc.

After: Give back to your nervous system. Bath or showers are great, shake it out or dance it out for 5 mins. solo or with someone, take a bunchaa deep breaths (I like to grunt on the exhale to get some frustration out too), hum a song you like to yourself while laying on the floor with knees up, squeeze yourself hard and put ice on the back of your neck (or suck on some ice), drink something bubbly or citrusy, BIG long hug, go to your notes app and vent your heart out, etc.

HOW TO: COMBAT MANIPULATION TACTICS

Guilt Tripping with Fog

This is common for narcissistic parents to use fear, guilt, and the guise of obligation to evoke the kind of guilt that makes us give in to their desires and wants of us. Even at the expense of our own wants, needs, rights, boundaries, or comfort levels. They may talk in circles while doing this and bring up the past to twirl you into a fog of guilt and flashbacks of things you can't quite remember. The guilt paired with the fog make it difficult to say no when they do this.



HOW TO: COMBAT MANIPULATION TACTICS



Guilt Tips:

- Try and **FEEL** where you physically experience shame and guilt. Does your tummy hear up above your ribcage (this is me), does your throat close up, do you start to sweat, do your cheeks heat up?
- Notice when that feeling comes up for you when in conversation with them, this will be a huge clue that ***something*** is off and needing to be paid attention to, your body may be remembering and experiencing the all-too-familiar feeling of being manipulated
- Ask yourself if you have a need to feel guilty for this. Is this being stretched by them, am i even in the wrong, what was being asked of **ME** in that moment and did it go against my boundaries and comfort levels, if they were a friend would i feel guilty for this, would i tell a friend that **THEY** should feel guilty for this if they did/didn't do the same thing?
- Remind yourself that you don't owe an explanation for your choices

Comparison

You may be compared to a sibling, a co-worker, a cousin, a family member, a family friend, that random checkout person they talked to for 5 minutes earlier that day. Basically anybody they can who helps ***prove*** their point at the time of the comparison. Do not waste your energy fighting to prove your accomplishments, who you are, what you've done, what your goals are, or anything of the sort, to people who don't want to acknowledge them in the first place.

Comparison Tips:

- don't give in. say something along the lines of, "that's your opinion of me, we're all allowed to have opinions" and walk away immediately thinking about 3-5 things that **YOU** love, that you're good at, and that you're proud of yourself for. mute their voices and replace them with a compassionate version of yours!
- label comparisons as triangulation. meaning, they are trying to make you feel like shit for something by comparing, yes, but often this is also an attempt to start tension between you and the person you're being compared to as well, to loosen your closeness with them. This happens with siblings all the time in toxic families.
- switch. the. subject. or swiftly exit the conversation



HOW TO: COMBAT MANIPULATION TACTICS



Gaslighting:

Gaslighting is an insidious weapon of choice. It allows them to distort reality and deny anything that has happened. They also make you feel like you are the toxic one in the scenario or you are the one who is wrong, when it's really them. Gaslighting is a pattern and when you recognize it you can protect yourself. It's basically switching the blame back onto you, so that they do not need to be held accountable because they can't handle that.

Gaslighting Tip Through Example (second-person writing so may be triggering):

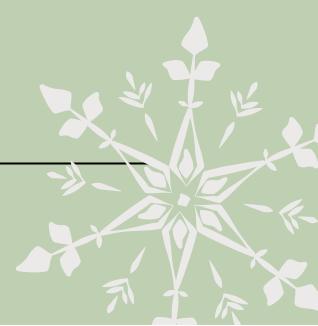
They walked into the kitchen and turned the heat up on the oven that's cooking dinner because they checked on it and just *decided* it needed to be higher. But they didn't relay this information to you. So, you wait the usual time you would have to go and check on your food, until the timer goes off, which is set to the temperature YOU set. Since you don't know the temperature has been increased, you start to smell something burning a bit.

You walk into the kitchen, open the oven, and a burning meal is staring you back in the face. You close the oven door, and their face meets you in the glass reflection of the oven (lol i'm just kidding). You close the oven door, notice the temperature dial, and *know* it was them because earlier they said about 5 times to me and everybody else that it needed to be turned up. (justtttt to make it seem like once again, i didn't know what I was doing - eyeroll). So you walk into the room and let them know that the meal is burnt and might be a bit dry tonight.

And of COURSE they have something to say about it.

They say something along the lines of, "see, i could have helped you earlier but you didn't want any," or "oh, i'm going to need some more wine" or "oh dear, it's okay you burnt dinner." and that grinds your gears, so you say, "the temperature on the oven was increased without me knowing. do you know anything about that?"

this is where the gaslighting starts



HOW TO: COMBAT MANIPULATION TACTICS



this is where the gaslighting starts

they mention knowing nothing about it. You mention her making remarks about it earlier. They protest that it's so terrible to accuse them of something so ridiculous. They proceed to patronize you and let you know it's more than okay the dinner was ruined and that they would order in for you both instead (this is to show you messed up, you're being rude, but they will save the day).

But you, being your badass self, bring it back to the point at hand and stand your ground. You say, "Nobody else here would have done that, and if they had, they would have let me know. People don't just do that in other people's homes, especially not without asking. You have been talking up and down about how I needed to change it." They try to protest, and you grey-rock the shit outta them. and then state your boundary, "If you are unable to be here respectfully and take accountability for something you know you did, then I want you to leave." If they protest, just keep repeating the same boundary either the same way or in different words. If they continue to try to gaslight you, manipulate you, blame you, guilt you, keep stating your boundary. they need to leave.

Key Info:

- don't get swept up in their attempts to change the narrative of what happens, what gets said, who does what, etc. if you get that crunchy feeling in your gut when their story doesn't match what you remember, it's NOT because you're remembering it wrong, it's because it is wrong. It's not what happened and you know it. they will try to convince your mind otherwise though
- try to stay grounded and gray-rock
- don't give into your self-doubt, trust you remember it correctly
- after, write down what happened, so that YOU have a concrete way to revisit the actual events if ever this gets brought back up again, which it will
- state the facts you know, and you can even say "that's not how i remember it," they will reply with something like your memory is wrong, and you can just repeat the phrase again, "well, that's not how i remember it"
- state your boundary as many times as you need, stay true to your own reality of events not theirs, and follow through with your boundary



HOW TO: COMBAT MANIPULATION TACTICS



Shaming:

When your parent tries to make you feel bad about being yourself, or shames you into low self-esteem so you're easier to manipulate and more agreeable with them. That's what they're hoping anyway, to make you feel so shitty that you don't have the oomf to stand up for yourself anymore because it makes you feel like you're not worth standing up for. crap feeling, you don't deserve it. neope!

Try RAIN:

RECOGNIZE what they are doing

ALLOW life to just be as is (remind yourself that this is how this person is, they are toxic, spewing their toxic fumes, and this is how they are regardless of what you do or don't do. the shaming is actually more about them than it is about you. this is not the same as accepting their behaviour, it's allowing you to let yourself not give their bullshit anymore attention

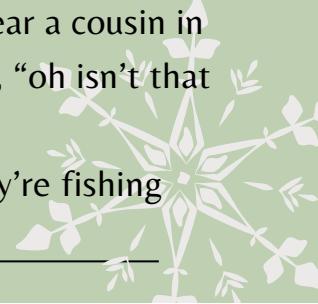
INVESTIGATE how you're feeling internally with gentle attention (create an internal barrier that reminds you that you're an amazing compassionate person & that what they are saying is an opinion, not true for you)

NURTURE yourself (remind yourself that you do not deserve the horrible things being said to you, and think about if you can connect what they were saying to you, to anything about them. Chances are, they're projecting in some way. Remind yourself that all of this was an attempt to lower your self-esteem, don't let them do dat. they a poop head. you not.

Dog Whistling:

so you know how with dog whistles, dogs are the only ones who notice it and who can hear it? this is basically the same thing, except you're being treated like the dog. they will give you a look in front of others only you understand, or will say something that only you will understand their true meaning of. Example: They always are commenting on how you're not married to a doctor or something, and at the gathering, you can hear a cousin in conversation with them mentioning they just married a doctor. they then say, "oh isn't that nice, marrying a doctor" as they give you a glance only you understand.

Tip: Don't show that it's effected you, don't give it attention. that's what they're fishing for.



KEY BEHAVIOURS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Don't Be Surprised if They:

- attempt to lovebomb you to make up for whatever not so awesome thing they've done recently, or to try and build guilt to get you to be a bit more lenient with them/their wants
- give you gifts and money to try and seem like they are there for you, they care about you, and that they are a good parent to you. this will not stick.
- some may withhold gifts, or threaten to take you out of their will, or get someone else the gift you wanted instead of you... just to try and guilt you into something, punish you for something, and make you feel like the other person was worthy of the gift you wanted by you were not it seems. Narcissists do things that often times would make you sound ridiculous if you were to confront them about it. on purpose. If you were to question the no gifts and ask for the reason, you're selfish for being so gimme gimme. If you were to mention something about the other person receiving what you wanted, you're also seen as the selfish, rude one. It's a set up, 100%. Don't give them their supply in this. Their power exists in this scenario only if you entertain these behaviours and give attention to them, ask about them, dive deeper into it. What really grinds their gears... is when you don't. get. effected. They can't stand it. Kind of like toddlers when they're trying to bug another kid, but it's not working, the frustrationnnn is real!
- listing off all the things they've done for you
- listing off all the reasons why you owe them 'x'
- suddenly becoming ill around the holidays and needing your support
- getting angry and turning to manipulation tactics or guilt tactics if they are not the centre of attention (if they are at an event hosted by someone else they will be jealous that the host is getting the praise, if they are not the one being doted on, etc.)
- lashing out at others not coming to see them and telling everyyybodyyyy and their neighbour about it and about how horrible it is that you won't see them
- flying monkeys swooping in to try and get you to connect or reach out to your parent (when you're low contact and no contact this happens and can be amplified around the holidays and special occasions)
- new rumours popping up about you that are untrue, created to get you upset about something that is being blown out of proportion or just straight up untrue, in hopes of you reaching out to set the story straight with them. This is to hopefully MAKE you connect with them. let the rumours fly, those who know you shouldn't be phased.

KEY BEHAVIOURS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

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- seeing photos online that they have posted of you, or your kids, or something you absolutely did not send to them. if you're low contact or no contact, they will do this to get you to reach out to them about it. if this happens, know this is textbook behaviour. report the photo(s), reach out to the platforms to get them taken down if you can, exhaust every avenue before reaching out. And IF you do need to reach out to them, if it's getting out of hand, let them know in an email in writing that you are requesting for them to remove all photos of your children, and (here's the boundary) if they do not remove the photos within 24 hours, a police report will be filed for posting photos of a minor without expressed written consent from their parent/legal guardian. And follow through if it comes to that.
- question you, your life, your choices, your partner, your hair changes.. literally ANYTHING that they can do to irk you, get to you, poke you, they will do it
- they MAY also not bother you at all. this is called reverse-hoovering, when they are hoping that by NOT contacting you it will cause you to think of why they are not, and miss them, or at LEAST "wonder why no contact this year, that's odd." In this case, throwing you off and hoping you'll reach out to them because they *oddly* haven't reached out like they usually do and maybe something's up. Don't do it. NEOPE.

Think about this too:

Think about the guilt you will feel towards yourself way later in life, if you look back on your life and see that you lived it entirely catering to other people.

Don't cheat yourself out of YOU by listening to the YOU others want to see!
You deserve to feel light inside and free and happy to be you, and happy to get to KNOW you!

Live life for you.
Live these holidays for you.

COMBATTING INTERNAL GUILT

“They don’t know any better, or they just don’t know right from wrong, so they don’t really know that they’re mistreating me”

- If they didn’t know right from wrong, they wouldn’t pick and choose when to put their “mask” on/take it off
- they wouldn’t keep up the facade around other people, or be able to give YOU trouble for things if they didn’t know right from wrong
- they wouldn’t try to manipulate others around you into thinking YOU’RE the problem before you can share what’s really happening (so that who you tell is less likely to think poorly of your parent(s))

The GUILT Is NOT Yours To Hold.

Here’s one BIG reason why it doesn’t belong to you:

BOUNDARIES + HUMAN DECENCY!

A.K.A. Doorways into your life.

ALL they had to do to be around you, be in your life, etc. is to treat you like a decent human being and respect very basic boundaries that ANY person deserves to have by default.

Cutting ties with someone either with low contact or no contact at all is hard, especially if it’s your parent(s). It is woven into us to try and make that connection work by any means necessary and exhaust all options.

Well, when you have, and when it goes nowhere and just gets worse and you still find you’re a shell of yourself because of them or when you’re around them/in contact... and they STILL fuck with you? You need to do what’s best for you, and unfortunately, sometimes that means no longer communicating with those who stomp on your humanity for their own agenda. gross.

REMEMBER: They know EXACTLY what it means to cross a boundary - they’re experts at it if any of theirs ever get crossed. But when it’s one THEY’RE crossing, suddenly boundaries is a new language to them.

p.s.

“If you’re no contact:

Grieving the loss of your narcissistic parent(s) after going low/no contact is normal!

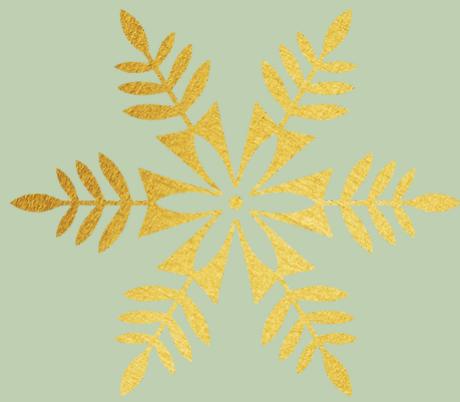
&

It doesn’t mean you’re doing the wrong thing.

You’re allowed to feel grief AND relief at the same time. Let them.

You Got This
You’re the tits
& I believe in you!

Happy Holidays
- Ash xo



HOLIDAY THRIVE-GUIDE

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