

HOLIDAY GUIDE

to calm and connection



Rituals and reflections to protect
your calm and deepen your
connections this season

By Jennifer Westpfahl of Be. Retreats

Finding Calm in the Cold and the Clamor



The next few months bring gatherings and celebrations — Thanksgiving tables, holiday parties, candlelight services, and New Year reflections.

They also bring shorter days, darker skies, and, for many, endless to-do lists.

But what if this season could be a **season of rest, intention, stillness, and connection** for you?

By embracing the natural rhythm of winter and approaching your holidays with purpose, you can trade frenzy for fulfillment, obligation for connection, and chaos for calm.

This guide is your companion in doing just that — through simple rituals, thoughtful questions, and small but powerful shifts.

How to use this guide

This is YOUR guide, not just to read, but to use. To linger with. To reflect on. Let it guide you to calm and connection.

Each section offers:

- Inspiration for tips and rituals to try right away.
- Reflection prompts to tailor the concepts to you.
- A personal story to ground the ideas in real life.

You can move through the guide all at once or use just the section you most need right now. It doesn't need to be done start to finish. Jump around as you feel moved. Return to the guide often to check in on what you need to feel calm and connected.

Add your success stories from this year or holiday memories that you want to hold on to in the three spots that say "My story."

I recommend printing it so you can write in the journal sections. If that's not possible, keep a notebook or journal alongside it.

However you use this guide, consider it your invitation to slow down, look around, and remember what matters most.

Section 1

EMBRACE

the rhythm of winter

Winter invites us inward.

The trees rest. The animals hibernate. The light dims.

Instead of resisting the cold and dark, lean into them.

Rest like nature does.

Create warmth, softness, and quiet inside your home
—and inside yourself.

WINTER ISN'T SOMETHING
TO ENDURE. IT'S AN
INVITATION TO EMBRACE
STILLNESS.



TRY THIS

Cozy Rituals for Rest and Joy

Set up your comfort corner



Dedicate a chair or small table to cozy hobbies — knitting, journaling, reading, puzzles, crosswords, painting. Keep everything you need within reach so you can easily slip into calm.

Invite others to join you



Host a “slow night in” — old movies and cocoa, a knitting circle, or a candlelight board game.

Savor your comfort foods



Make soup in big batches. Warm a mug of cider, chai, or mulled wine. Bake bread or cookies. Roast vegetables. Anything that smells like home and warms your heart.

Go outside intentionally



Don't just trudge from car to door. Bundle up and take a twilight walk or candlelit snowshoe. Build a snowman. Enjoy an outdoor fire.

* Through the guide, candle means stillness, hearts mean connection, snowflakes means rest, and compass means intention. Many times, these values overlap and weave together.

REFLECTION

How Can I Rest Better This Winter?

What parts of winter do I tend to resist? How can I embrace them?

What activities and environments help me feel rested?



REFLECTION

How Can I Rest Better This Winter?

What tastes, smells, sounds, and feels help me feel cozy and calm?

How can I build those cozy, calm moments into my daily routine?

Jennifer's story



Last year, I put throw blankets, candles, and our Bluetooth speaker into our under-used family room and set up a puzzle on the table.

Each day after work, I turned on soft music, lit the candles, and worked on the puzzle. Family members were invited to join as they came home.

That small ritual turned a dark season into something restorative and special.

My story

Section 2

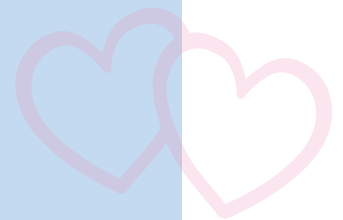
GIVE THE GIFT *of being seen*

The best part of any gathering isn't the food or the decorations — it's the feeling of being known.

You can make that happen with intention.

Small shifts in how you start conversations, whether 1:1 or in groups, can build genuine **connection**.

CONNECTION DOESN'T
HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.
IT'S DESIGNED THROUGH
CURIOSITY AND CARE



TRY THIS

Connection-Building Conversations

Do your research



Before gatherings, scroll back through messages or social posts. Find one thing to ask each person about — a new job, a recent trip, a hobby.

Ask open and specific questions



Instead of “How was your trip?”

→ “What was your favorite thing you saw?”

Instead of “How's work?”

→ “What project has you excited now?”

Instead of “How are the kids?”

→ “What's Taylor most into these days?”

Keep a few go-to questions in your pocket that work for many people



→ “What's brought you joy lately?”

→ “What's something you're looking forward to this season?”

→ “What is something fun you did on a recent weekend?”

REFLECTION

Designing for Connection

Who do I want to feel more connected to this season? Print and complete this page for each of them.

When will I see them? Will it be a place we can really talk?

Do I need to make arrangements to get time with them?

What do I already know about what matters to them?

What could I ask that would show I remember and care?



A friend who remembered my love of travel asked, "Do you have any trips coming up?"

It opened the door perfectly — and I felt remembered, not self-conscious. That's what thoughtful curiosity does.

My story

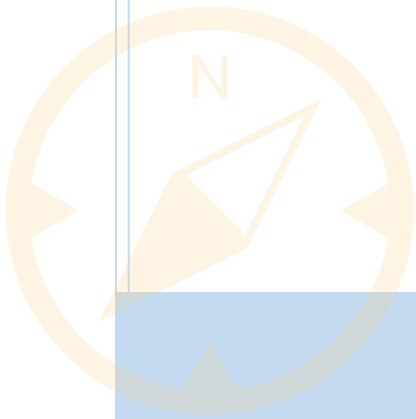
Section 3

MEASURE

by meaning

You don't have to attend every event, buy every gift, or decorate every surface. This season, slow down and focus on traditions that matter to you — or start new ones.

When you choose fewer things, but with greater **intention**, you create more space for connection, joy, and memories.



TRADITIONS DON'T HAVE
TO BE ELABORATE. THEY
JUST HAVE TO BE YOURS.

TRY THIS

Rituals for Meaningful Holidays



Candle of intention

Light a candle of intention daily or weekly or during special events to remind yourself what matters most to you about this season.



Collect memory ornament

Create or buy a memory ornament that represents a highlight from the past year. If you do this each year, you can look back on those memories every time you bring them out.



Host a Gratitude Gathering

Whether on Thanksgiving or not, make at least one event into a Gratitude Gathering, asking everyone to share a specific thing they are grateful for (beyond "family" or "good health").



Let go of what doesn't serve you

Close the year with a symbolic act of release, like writing down and burning activities, habits, attitudes, etc., that you want to leave behind.

REFLECTION

What makes my holidays meaningful?

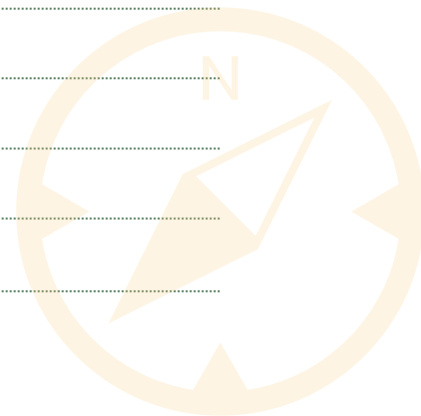
What moments from past holidays stand out most as meaningful?

What do those moments tell me about what I value?

REFLECTION

What makes my holidays meaningful?

How can I bring those moments forward?



What do I want to repeat, change, or release this year?

Jennifer's story



I'm creating a new tradition this year for my oldest child.

We watched a TikTok series together where a man's sister gave him an Advent calendar with daily challenges to hide a key according to clues.

My daughter loved the idea, so I'm building a book-themed daily Advent challenge for her, because she is a big reader.

This shared ritual adds joy and connection to December.

My story

Keep Coming Back



Revisit these pages through the season. Add notes about what's working, what feels overwhelming, and what moments brought calm or connection.

Let this guide become a quiet companion reminding you that even in the busiest times, you can:

- Rest like nature does
- Connect through curiosity
- Celebrate with intention

NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?

Would you like more support in building rest, intention, stillness, and connection into your life? Or more space for the kind of reflection and ideas shared in this guide? Join the Be. Retreats email list for weekly insights and information about online or in-person retreats.

www.beretreats.co/#list

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