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By Gwen
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One Doesn't Have to Be the Loneliest Number

Nine reasons why “alone” in December doesn't have to mean “lonely”



Colored lights, garish department store decorations, stale fruitcake – the holiday season has no shortage of truly unpleasant aspects. And especially for those who find themselves single, the prospect of being the only unattached person among seemingly countless mistletoe-seeking couples can seem not just daunting, but depressing. Not so.

Regardless of why you are a singleton this year, flying solo during the last months of the year has its up-sides. Somewhere between the eight days of



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Chanukah and the 12 days of Christmas are nine great reasons why being single at the holidays not only doesn't suck., it can be downright liberating.

1. Decking the halls your way. You choose how to decorate and celebrate the holidays, says Naples, FL.-based relationship expert April Masini, founder of AskApril.com. You don't have to display ugly family heirlooms from his side or endure the horrid mincemeat pies her grandmother always made. There's a lot to be said for exercising your own taste.

2. Total remote control. From movies to music, you get to decide the media that populates your day, says Joel Goodman, founder of The Humor Project, Saratoga, Springs, NJ. Fighting over the remote or radio station just doesn't happen. And if you have kids who try to wrestle that control away from you, pull rank by reminding them who pays the bills.

3. In-law emancipation. Content marketing consultant Meg Charendoff of Elkins Park, PA. remembers holidays as a barrage of corrections from her ex-mother-in-law to baste, check, mash, stir, turn down, turn up, or otherwise tend to whatever she was cooking. When she appeared solo at a recent gathering that included her ex and his family, she was free of the criticism. "I watched her boss around my husband's new fiancée in a way that she couldn't do to me anymore. It felt good to be free of that," she says.

4. Calendar control. Jill Denbo Levitt, of Trenton, NJ says she fiercely guards her time during the holidays, opting to spend a day going to the gym, cooking and relaxing on her own instead of getting caught up in the hustle and bustle. While she may make plans with friends she enjoys, she doesn't let herself be pressured into doing things she doesn't want to do and uses the word "no" with abandon.

5. Freedom to feel. Sometimes, being single at the holidays may be a drag, especially if you've recently lost a relationship or loved one. It's okay to feel sad, but the key is to find a way to bring yourself comfort, Masini says. Call a good friend or plan get-togethers with people who make you laugh.

6. "You" time. Take that time you would have spent schlepping to a second family celebration and book a spa treatment or take a yoga class. Denbo uses the time around the holidays to do things she loves and to "recharge." Much of that time is spent on her own. "When I got divorced, my mom taught me really well. She said, 'You have to enjoy being with yourself and being alone without feeling

lonely.’ Now, I cherish that time,” she says.

7. Guilt-free self-shopping. Engage in a little “one for them and one for me” retail therapy. No one is going to object if you buy a little something for yourself while you’re checking off all those names on the list, Masini says.

8. Chance to reframe. When Levitt recently received a three-month membership to Match.com as a gift from a well-meaning relative, she chose to shrug it off instead of getting upset or offended at the implication that she had to be paired off. That choice of how to react is something we may forget we have, Goodman says.

“Stress is not an event. It’s a perception of an event. So, we can choose the perception we take. Single is awful and lonely or that it’s freeing and liberating,” he says.

9. New traditions. Don’t want to attend a booze-soaked New Year’s Eve party? Then don’t, Masini says. Go skating, host your own party, or do something you love with friends, she suggests. Or make yourself a nice meal and spend the evening binge watching a buzz-worthy TV series you never got a chance to see this year. Find the best way to make yourself happy and go for it with abandon.

“You’re celebrating the time of the year. Maybe you’re celebrating because of how religious you are or what your religion is. But it’s a time to be thankful and grateful for what you have in your life, regardless of what it is. And why wouldn’t you?” Masini says.

Photos:

Sitting by miniature Christmas tree

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Man walking with Christmas tree

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