

HOW TO KEEP DECEMBER'S MAGIC ALIVE WITHOUT FALLING INTO THE TRAP OF “HOLIDAY DISAPPOINTMENT”

December is a month that wraps itself in big, sparkly expectations. Between holiday gatherings, picture-perfect traditions and endless to-do lists, it's easy to feel like there's a mountain to climb before we reach that cherished “cozy family holiday.” And for moms? Sometimes it feels like we're standing at the base of that mountain, balancing the bags, kids, and maybe even a tray of cookies that have seen better days.

But here's the truth no one tells us enough: ***the holidays don't have to be perfect to be beautiful.*** In fact, trying to make everything “just right” might be the quickest way to invite disappointment. So, how do we steer clear of feeling let down when December doesn't go exactly according to plan?

Here's seven ways to help us moms unwrap a season full of joy—not because everything is perfect, but because we're choosing to see the beauty in the realness of this season.

1. SET YOUR OWN EXPECTATIONS, NOT SOCIETY'S

It's easy to get swept up in what everyone else is doing. Instagram and Pinterest paint this dazzling picture of the holidays, where cookies are frosted to perfection and family photos look magazine-ready. But here's the thing—none of those images show the whole story. Behind every perfect moment, there's a little chaos, maybe a few arguments, and yes, probably a forgotten gift or two.

Ask yourself: what kind of December will genuinely bring joy to you and your family? Whether it's simplifying the decor, ditching an elaborate holiday card, or choosing just a couple of traditions to focus on, setting realistic expectations that fit your life will help guard your heart from disappointment.

2. LET GO OF THE “SHOULD” AND EMBRACE THE “COULDS”

The “shoulds” are the invisible checklist of all the things we feel we should do to have a “successful” holiday: we should host the perfect dinner, we should buy thoughtful gifts for every person we know, we should keep the house spotless for unexpected guests.

This December, let's replace the “shoulds” with “coulds.” Instead of thinking, “I should bake cookies for the neighbors,” ask yourself, “I could bake cookies, but would that bring joy to me and my family? Or would it be another item on a never-ending list?”

When we trade “should” for “could,” we allow ourselves the freedom to choose what truly matters. And in that freedom, we might just find a little more peace.

3. LEAVE ROOM FOR THE IMPERFECT MOMENTS

The most memorable holiday moments rarely happen in the staged, planned, and perfected parts of the season. More often, they're the moments that sneak up on us. The kids dancing to holiday music in their pajamas, the crooked gingerbread house that's more “abstract” than “architectural wonder,” or the impromptu family game night that goes hilariously sideways.



Leave room for these unscripted moments. They're the ones that stick with us long after December fades. The more we embrace the imperfect and the unexpected, the more we're able to let go of a rigid vision of how things "should" look.

4. ASK FOR HELP—IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A ONE-WOMAN SHOW

Let's be real: so much of holiday prep can fall on us as moms. It's easy to feel like we're holding everything together with a well-tied holiday bow. But we don't have to carry it all alone. Reach out to friends, family, or even your partner for help.

Whether it's trading off who's cooking or letting grandparents take the kids for a few hours so you can wrap presents (or just catch your breath!), inviting others into the holiday prep isn't a failure; it's an invitation to make memories together. And who knows? You might even create a new tradition in the process.

5. FOCUS ON PRESENCE OVER PERFECTION

We hear this all the time, but it's a principle worth holding close, especially when the holiday whirlwind picks up. Our kids aren't going to remember how many gifts were under the tree or if the house looked picture-perfect. What they'll remember is how they felt.

They'll remember if we laughed with them, if we listened to their stories, if we let them "help" decorate the tree (even if it meant the bottom half had all the ornaments). They'll remember the warmth of family more than the flash of things.

6. MAKE PEACE WITH SAYING "NO"

We often say "yes" in December—yes to parties, to Secret Santa, to helping out here and there. And while all those things we say "yes" to can be fun, they can also be draining. Remember, it's okay to say "no." Saying no to an extra commitment might be saying yes to a peaceful evening with your family, or a few quiet hours to recharge.

Choose when to use your "yes" wisely. The holidays aren't about cramming in as much as we can—they're about holding close what we truly love.

7. WRAP UP THE GIFT OF GRACE (FOR YOURSELF)

Moms, let's be real with ourselves: we're doing a lot. And we're doing our best. There's no need to add the weight of perfection on top of everything else. If December doesn't look like a holiday card, that's more than okay. It's probably better, because it's real.

Grace is a gift we can accept—a gentle reminder that, even in our imperfections, we are loved. When we feel the pull of disappointment or the fear of not measuring up, let's remind ourselves that this season isn't about "getting it right." It's about being together, as the beautifully messy, wonderfully unique family we are.

This December, let's give ourselves permission to find joy in the small, unplanned moments. Let's embrace what feels true to our family and let go of the rest. Because in the end, it's the simple, real moments that our hearts will hold onto. So, here's to a December where we aren't chasing a picture-perfect holiday, but instead savoring a season that feels like us.