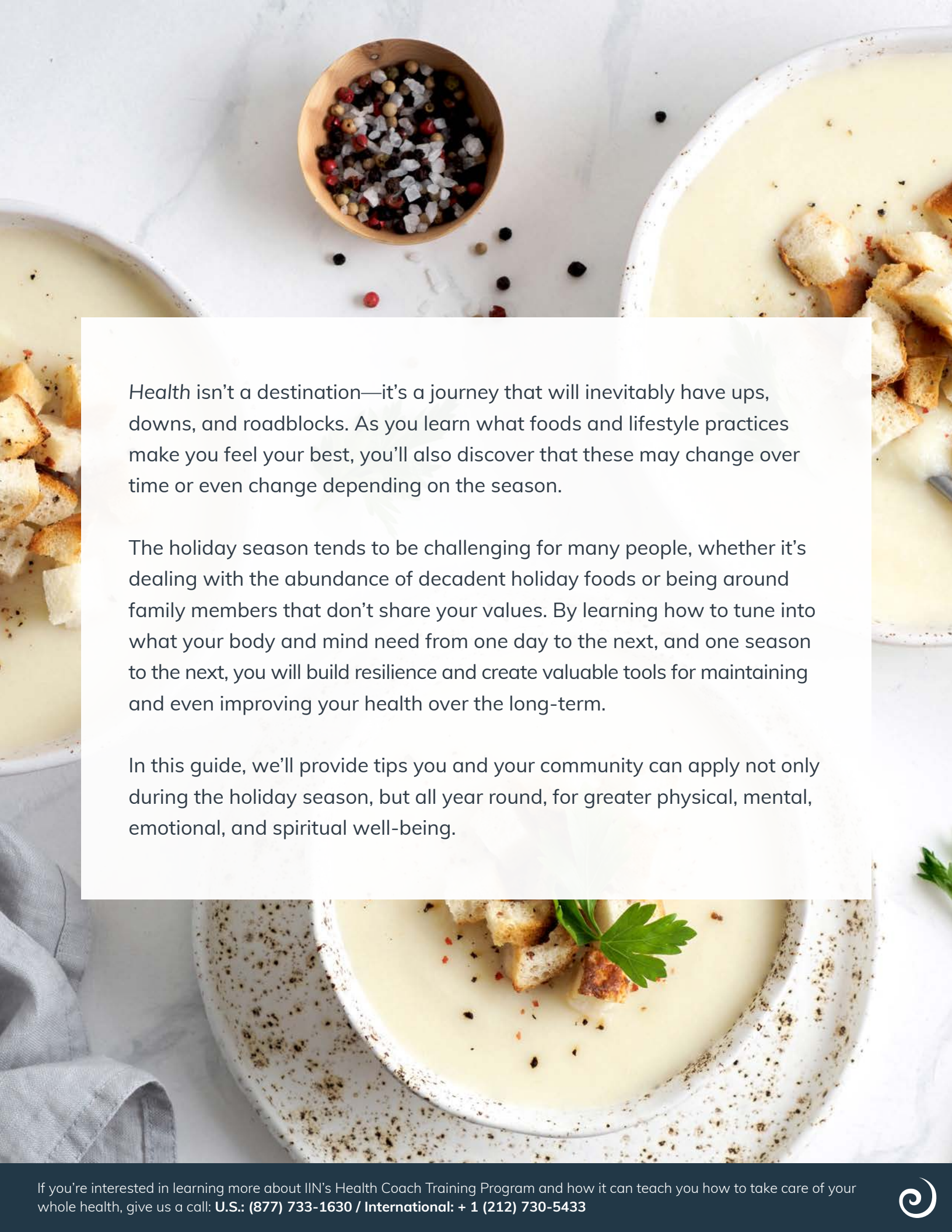




# IIN's Healthy Holiday Toolkit

*How to Support Yourself, Your Family &  
Clients During the Holiday Season*





Health isn't a destination—it's a journey that will inevitably have ups, downs, and roadblocks. As you learn what foods and lifestyle practices make you feel your best, you'll also discover that these may change over time or even change depending on the season.

The holiday season tends to be challenging for many people, whether it's dealing with the abundance of decadent holiday foods or being around family members that don't share your values. By learning how to tune into what your body and mind need from one day to the next, and one season to the next, you will build resilience and create valuable tools for maintaining and even improving your health over the long-term.

In this guide, we'll provide tips you and your community can apply not only during the holiday season, but all year round, for greater physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.





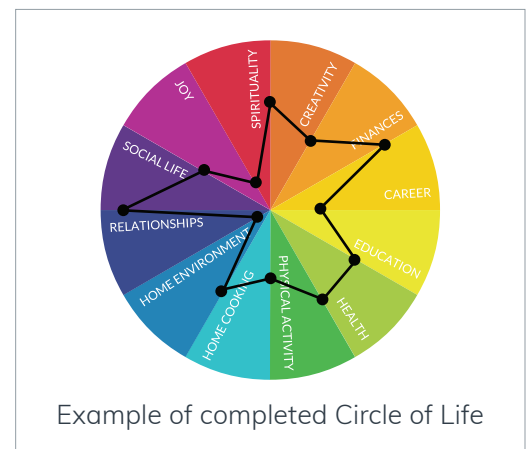
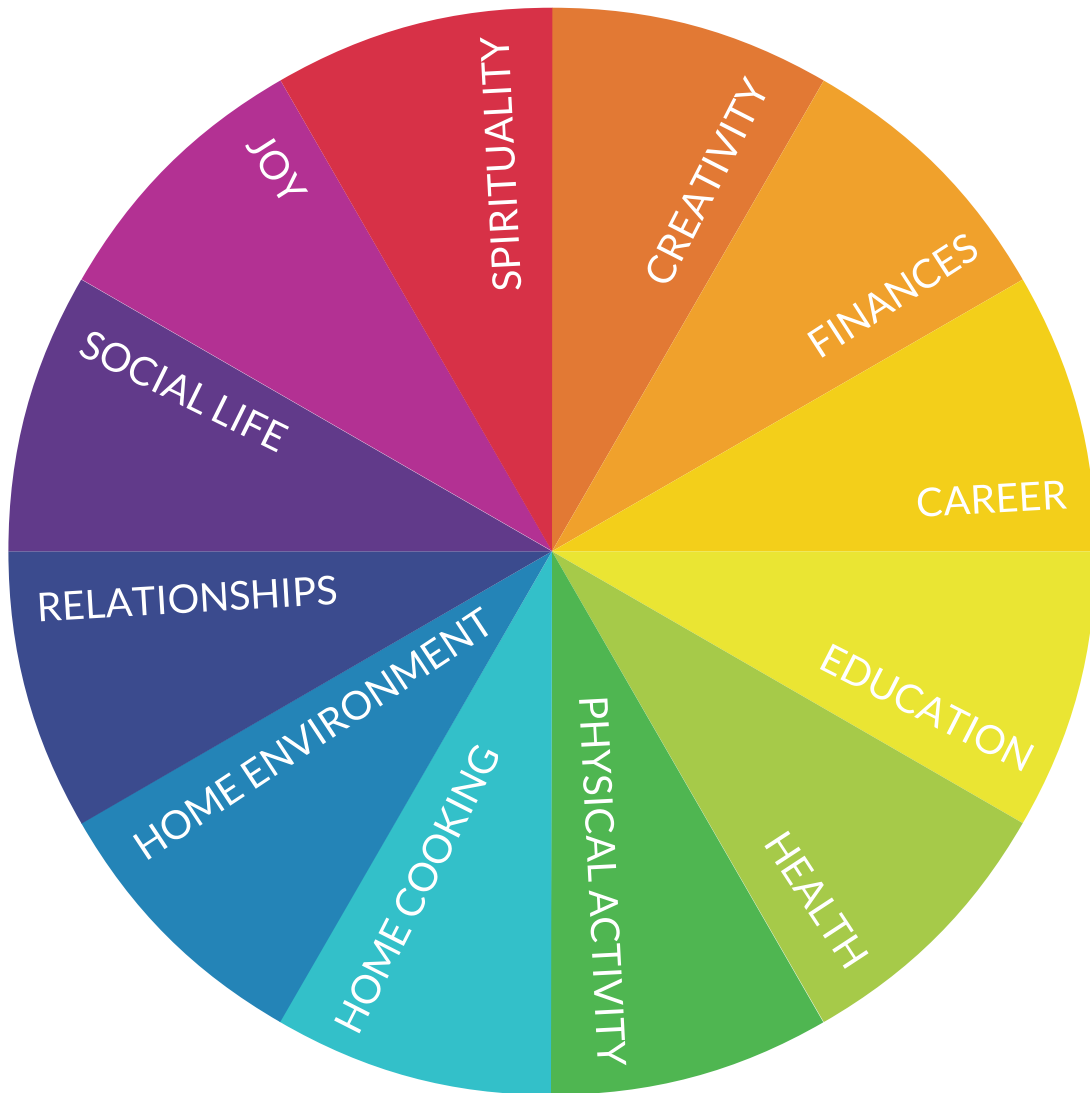
# The Circle of Life

This tool is incredibly valuable for exploring the areas of your life that feel balanced and nourished, and which areas need more attention. This tool also creates increased self-awareness for how your needs change over time, as you can return to this exercise again and again to measure your progress and growth.



# INTERACTIVE CIRCLE OF LIFE TOOL

Print this page and do this exercise by hand, or click [this link](#) to access the interactive tool on the IIN website.



Example of completed Circle of Life



## Instructions

Place a dot within each section to mark how fulfilled you feel in that area of your life. Ask yourself questions like, how do my relationships make me feel? Am I happy in my career? Is my health where I want it to be? A dot placed towards the center of the circle indicates dissatisfaction, while a dot placed towards the outside indicates satisfied and fulfilled. Then, connect the dots.

## Interpreting Your Results

The rounder and wider your circle is, the more balanced you feel in these areas. Your Circle of Life highlights what feeds you in body, mind, and spirit—all of the things found off your plate that nourish you just as much as food.

- ✓ **Tip:** *Do this exercise with your loved ones and talk about how you can support each other in addressing the areas that need more balance. For example, if your partner marked dissatisfaction with their physical activity, ask them how they envision improving in that area, what steps they can take to get there, and how you can support them.*

If you do this exercise as the holiday season begins, you can prepare yourself for any upcoming stress or anxiety by reminding yourself of which areas you wanted to focus on, and create strategies for addressing them in real-time.

In this guide, we provide tips for taking care of each of the major areas of health that people tend to struggle with during the holiday season.





# Mental & Emotional Health During the Holiday Season

The holiday season can bring up a lot of emotions, from missing loved ones who have passed away to being around family who don't bring out the best in you, and everything and anything in between. It can also be difficult to manage the stress that comes along with planning and hosting gatherings, the logistics of traveling, or even being alone for the holidays. Whatever challenge you face, there are ways to manage and take care of your mental and emotional well-being.



## √ **Make time for self-care**

Self-care isn't just a buzzworthy marketing term—it's a useful practice that can help you take care of yourself so you can better show up for others. From meditation to face masks, a bath to a walk around the neighborhood, find what makes you feel replenished. And no, it doesn't need to be expensive, trendy, or Instagram-worthy. [Read more on ways to practice self-care.](#)

## √ **Create boundaries with effective communication**

If you worry about being around family members who ask you invasive questions about your personal life or your health, you're not alone. Communicating your boundaries to these people – what you're comfortable and not comfortable with – will go a long way in managing your anxiety and mental well-being during the holidays. Simply saying, "I don't feel comfortable talking about this right now, but I would love to hear about..." can help you communicate your needs while actively showing respect and interest in the other person. [Read more tips on how to create boundaries with your family.](#)

## √ **Prioritize sleep and rest**

One night of bad sleep can make anyone irritable and moody, which is why it's especially important this time of year. If you have trouble sleeping, try limiting caffeine before bed (skip that late-night post-holiday-meal coffee) as well as limiting blue light from your phone or devices at least an hour before going to sleep. [Read more on creating the perfect environment for good sleep.](#)

You'll also want to prioritize rest, which is different than sleep – it means taking time to decompress, whether that's getting outside for fresh air, putting your phone away to watch a movie with your family, or taking a day off from work to "do nothing."

## √ **Write it all down**

If you're stressed about planning, hosting, and organizing, writing things down is a great way to keep track of everything. Use a notebook, a white board, or an app on your phone. Enlist someone to take responsibility for a portion of the list so you aren't responsible for everything. However you like to stay organized, it will feel great to check something off your list!





# Nutrition & Physical Health

'Tis the season for indulging in comfort foods and de-prioritizing exercise. There's nothing wrong with comfort foods, nor eating differently this time of year, but if it causes you stress or you are using food as a coping mechanism for dealing with emotions, there are ways to manage! Plus, find ways to re-prioritize exercise that work for you, even during the hustle and bustle of the season.





## ✓ **Eat balanced meals and indulge in cravings mindfully**

The holiday season can take you out of your normal routine, especially when it comes to food. If you know your evenings will be filled with finger foods and dessert tables, eating meals that focus on quality protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats can help you stay on track with any of your health-related goals. And if you find yourself eyeing those desserts at the party, give yourself permission to indulge mindfully, which means really savoring the experience. [Learn more about easing sweet cravings.](#)

## ✓ **Reframe your workout by building in natural movement**

It can be difficult any time of year to create a consistent exercise routine, let alone during the holiday season. One of the best ways to make exercise a regular part of your day is to reframe what exercise looks and feels like to you. If you can't take a dedicated chunk of time to work out, try splitting it up into smaller bouts, such as 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes in the middle of the day, and 10 minutes in the evening.

Working out also doesn't need to mean spending your time at the gym—do yard or house work, walk to the store for groceries, take your dog for a jog, or use your kitchen counter as a barre to do standing exercises. When you start to see parts of your day as opportunities for movement, your whole mindset around exercise will change for the better! [Read more on how to workout at home more efficiently.](#)

## ✓ **Keep healthy snacks in reach**

From Halloween to New Years, it might feel like there's always something decadent in the pantry you can snack on, from mini candy bars to leftover cake. Instead of "saving up" to be able to indulge in these sweet treats, try implementing IIN's concept of crowding out, which means prioritizing healthier foods that leave less room for the less-healthy foods. This could look like keeping the fridge stocked with veggies and hummus, leaving fresh fruit out in a bowl, or simply taking a spoonful of your favorite nut butter. [Get more healthy snack ideas from Integrative Nutrition Health Coaches.](#)

## ✓ **Do breathwork or meditate**

Breathwork and meditation can be powerful tools for dealing with stress and anxiety, especially as these feelings arise in real-time. By implementing these stress-management techniques into your routine, especially before the holiday season, you can feel prepared to handle anything that comes your way, from weather-related travel delays to "the dog ate our appetizers"! [Learn more about breathwork for managing stress.](#)

## ✓ **Be patient and kind to yourself**

Probably one of the most important mental and emotional health tips! Do you find that your self-talk is often negative? Would you talk that way to a friend or loved one? Adjusting your

inner self-talk to be kind, supportive, and patient will go a long way in how you feel and how you manage tough situations. It could even look like creating affirmations you repeat to yourself first thing in the morning or when you start to feel anxious. [Read more on affirmations for better mental health, including ones you can start using today.](#)

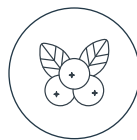
✓ **Find ways to ramp up nutritional quality of your favorite holiday foods**

Instead of cutting out your favorite holiday foods, try re-creating them:



**MAC AND CHEESE** → [VEGAN PUMPKIN ALFREDO PASTA](#)

Pumpkin is not only super flavorful, but also packed with fiber and the antioxidant beta-carotene, which is what gives pumpkin its bright color and is converted into vitamin A in the body. This vegan pasta alternative also contains nutritional yeast, a great substitute for cheese that contains important B vitamins.



**CANNED CRANBERRY SAUCE** → [HOMEMADE CRANBERRY SAUCE](#)

Canned cranberry sauce often has added sugar, so opt for making your own with fresh cranberries. If canned cranberry sauce is a tradition in your household, don't fret – you can still enjoy this tradition while being mindful of its nutrition. Mix it up and try both kinds at your holiday table!

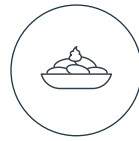


**MASHED POTATOES** → [MASHED CAULIFLOWER](#)

Potatoes are not unhealthy, and this does not mean you can't enjoy this delicious dish. Potatoes contain what's called resistant starch, which supports gut health, as well as have many vitamins and minerals, especially if you eat the skin.

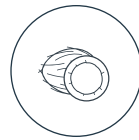
The cauliflower version of this beloved side dish will provide high doses of fiber, choline (an essential nutrient for cellular health and metabolism) and sulforaphane (an antioxidant that has been shown to suppress cancer growth). Plus, it's a lower-carb option for those who are monitoring their blood glucose.





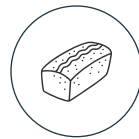
**FRIED LATKES** → [AIR-FRYER LATKES](#)

If you've ever made latkes before, you know how your clothes, hair, and entire home smells of fried oil and potatoes for days after the Chanukah party (it does smell amazing, though!). Skip the pan filled with oil and try making these pancakes in an air fryer. It does require some oil, though much less than classic frying. Plus, clean-up is a breeze.



**CLASSIC PAVLOVA** → [HEALTHIER PAVLOVA](#)

Popular in Australia during Christmastime, the classic Pavlova gets a fresh twist, swapping refined sugar and dairy for unrefined sugar and non-dairy coconut yogurt (plus, naturally gluten-free and topped with lots of fresh fruit). With more people cutting dairy and gluten from their diets, this could be a great way to make them feel included in the holiday festivities.



**CLASSIC ROSCÓN DE REYES** → [HEALTHIER ROSCÓN DE REYES](#)

This sweet bread slash cake, which roughly translates to Spanish Kings Cake, is a traditional dessert served during the Spanish holiday, Three Kings Day, and can be transformed into a little-bit-less indulgent treat with whole wheat flour instead of regular flour and less added sweetener. Enjoy with a hot cup of coffee at breakfast or as dessert after lunch.





# Spirituality During the Holiday Season

The holidays celebrated during this time of year are inherently spiritual, but if that doesn't resonate with you, that's OK! Spirituality can refer to the manner in which we seek, discover, and express meaning and purpose in our lives. **Spirituality**, especially this time of year, can be a way of experiencing interconnectedness with the universe, nature, or the people around you.



### ✓ Honor your culture and familial traditions through food

Whether you are celebrating on your own or gathering with others, eating foods that you grew up with and hold meaning for your culture can help you nourish your spiritual health. This practice can keep you connected with loved ones who are no longer around, or who are residing elsewhere in the world, as well as keep important traditions alive for generations to come. Food brings people together in a way that not many other things in life do. [Learn more about the health benefits behind traditional foods, including recipes to try this season.](#)

### ✓ Shift your mindset around holiday gatherings

Since spirituality is all about experiencing connectivity with others and your surroundings, how can you integrate this into your holiday gatherings? This could look like asking your guests to reflect on what they're grateful for and what they appreciate about the person sitting next to them. This could also look like your own personal reflection on what family and gathering means to **you**, which could help soothe any anxious feelings as you are instead focusing on the positive aspects of the season. [Read more on creating a spiritual practice.](#)

### ✓ Spend time in nature, or find a way to bring nature inside

The change of the seasons is not only reflected in the physical change of your environment, but also in how they feel emotionally and spiritually. Spending time in nature can be grounding, helping you to reconnect with yourself and what you need. Bring this energy into the holiday season by getting outside as much as the weather in your area allows, as well as bringing nature in, such as collecting leaves or wild flowers for your décor or lighting candles with seasonal scents.

### ✓ Play music and soothing sounds

Music has the ability to bring people together and transform the atmosphere. It also has the ability to transform your mood, which can be incredibly helpful during a busy and stressful season. There are no rules when it comes to what types of music to play to improve your mood – it's totally up to you! However, [research has shown that classical music](#) in particular can significantly reduce feelings of stress.

### ✓ Volunteer your time or other resources to those who need it

Donating your time, money, or resources to those who need it can be incredibly impactful any time of year, and especially during the holiday season. From preparing and serving food at a local food pantry or homeless shelter, to donating your time to a local community center to speak on health and wellness, choose what feels best and resonates most with you. Making these kinds of connections within your local community can provide you with a sense of purpose, and support your overall well-being.





# Share the Gift of Great Health

Share this guide with friends, family, and loved ones to share the gift of great health this holiday season! Tag us on Instagram [@nutritionschool](#) and [@iinalumni](#) to show us how you're nourishing your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

