

# The Gift of Nope

How to protect your energy  
this holiday season



It's that time of year again. The calendar is filling up with holiday party RSVPs and endless shopping days, and we're filling up with stress and anxiety, wondering how we can possibly fit it all in. Add the looming threat of the credit card bill of *January, yet to come*, and the holiday season can feel like a marathon of obligations that leaves us counting down the days until it's over.

But what if the best gift you can give yourself and others is to stop chasing the picture-perfect holiday and start protecting your time and inner peace?

## The Real Cost of Holiday Cheer

When we think of the cost of the holidays, our minds typically go right to the price tag. That's understandable, as gifts and outings aren't

getting any cheaper. But the true cost of holiday indulgences is the emotional and mental toll we pay to obtain them.

Each visit to the overcrowded mall and every "unmissable" social obligation takes time and energy, leaving us feeling depleted and burnt out. We can run ourselves so ragged in pursuit of the "perfect" holiday that we're unable to bring our best selves to the table when we gather with people we *actually* want to be with.

It's helpful to remember that after a big purchase or expensive experience, the rush quickly fades, and happiness levels tend to revert to where they were before. Psychologists call this phenomenon the **hedonic treadmill**.

## How to Hop off the Treadmill

The pressure around the holidays can keep us on the hedonic treadmill until New Year's, [when we begin reactively setting resolutions](#) to undo the previous year's damage. But the good news is we can hop off the treadmill whenever we want by learning how to say "nope" to what doesn't align with our values.



Setting boundaries isn't about being a Scrooge; it's about being intentional with your time and energy. By doing less of what drains you, you can free up your holiday season for more meaningful experiences and deeper connections that contribute to long-term satisfaction.

If the thought of setting limits (with yourself or others) makes you uncomfortable, just remember: discomfort is fleeting, but the regret of taking on another commitment or debt can have a longer shelf life than your Aunt Griselda's fruitcake – and leave an even worse taste in your mouth.

### Simple Recipes for a More Intentional Season

If you've already braved the sales or overbooked your calendar, don't despair. It's never too late to hit pause and start reclaiming your peace by incorporating some of the following habits into your holiday routine.

 **Audit your obligations** – Give yourself the gift of “nope.” Before automatically accepting an invitation, pause. Ask yourself: “Will this activity energize me or drain me?” Be willing to decline requests that don't align with your peace. A simple “Thank you, but I can't make it this time!” is all the response you need.

 **Embrace good enough gifting** – Shift the focus from finding the perfect, most impressive (and perhaps most expensive) gift to offering something thoughtful and manageable. Consider homemade treats, a promise of your time, or a donation to a cause your giftee cares about.

 **Protect your rest, fiercely** – Guard your sleep and downtime as non-negotiable appointments. This might mean leaving a party early, delegating housework tasks to

family members, or scheduling an evening with absolutely no plans. A well-rested you is a more patient, joyful, and present you.

 **Prioritize connection over consumption** – Instead of another trip to the mall for more gifts, invest your time in an experience with your loved ones. Play a board game, look at old photos, cook a simple meal together, or just sit and talk. These moments of genuine connection are the true gifts of the season.

 **Create a cozy sanctuary** – Intentionally designate a part of your home as a peaceful haven. Light a candle, put on soft music, or enjoy a warm drink without your phone. [These small acts of relaxation](#) are powerful antidotes to the chaos of the outside world.

By choosing to protect your time and peace, you're not missing out, but opting into a richer, more meaningful experience. Think of it as a gift to your future self, who will thank you for bringing better balance this holiday season.



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