

IT'S TIME

A newsletter of the Steve Hicks School of Social Work
Office of the Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusion

It's that time of year when we take a break from work or school and get together with friends and family to celebrate the holidays. This year, seemingly more than ever, we need the holidays for rest and restoration with people we love. But holidays can be hard, especially in an election year and when we're facing political tensions over racial and other injustices, restrictions on travel and social gatherings, a resurgence of the pandemic, and an economic recession. We hope this issue offers you some support in creating a restorative holiday season.

How do folx really feel about the holidays?

88% of us feel that the holiday season is the most stressful time of the year.

68% dislike thanksgiving food.

51% feel pressure to spend more money than they have.

90% celebrate Christmas, and almost half celebrate it as a cultural, rather than religious, holiday.

78% feel a strong sense of gratitude regularly, not only during Thanksgiving.

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November Holidays

As we enter the holiday season, we would like to acknowledge the many holidays that people in and beyond SHSSW celebrate, including:

All Saint's Day, Dia de los Muertos, Veteran's Day, Diwali, Transgender Remembrance Day, National Day of Mourning, Thanksgiving, the Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, Hanukkah, Las Posadas, Advent, Christmas, and Kwanzaa.

DRAWING LINES IN THE SAND: IMPORTANT TIPS FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES



With most people working from home these days, the lines between our professional and personal lives are even more blurred than ever, which makes setting boundaries particularly important. This can be especially true for helping professionals, who tend to prioritize the needs of friends and family above their own. Licensed Clinical Social Worker and CARE Counselor Laura Dupuis observed that our helping nature makes it hard for friends and family to know where to draw the line when it comes to asking for advice. At the same time, when friends and family overshare (or over-ask!), our personal relationships can become strained. “We have to ask ourselves if the conversation is putting us in a position to act objectively, when we are not in fact objective” says Dupuis. Below are her tips for setting boundaries as we head in to this holiday season with friends and family.

- Be aware of the scenarios where you are more likely to be pulled into a social work role, like when a friend or family member is facing a hardship.
- If you are being asked to fill a role you are not comfortable with, kindly but firmly set clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
- If you find yourself acting the social worker but feel uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation, pay attention to that feeling. Ask yourself why you are reacting.
- Consider whether your reaction will worsen the situation; “Am I getting activated in a way that I will not be the best supporter?” Give yourself permission to step away from situations that are overly taxing.
- Practice the ever-elusive self-care. This may mean creating time to be alone.
- Seek the support of your social work peers. Ask others what works for them in setting boundaries.

Boundaries provide us with time to recharge and center ourselves, but setting boundaries can be easier said than done. Sometimes the hardest part is giving ourselves permission to say no to someone we love. Still, it is as essential to take care of ourselves as it is to help others, and anyone who loves us back can understand that.

HOW TO MIND THE GAP: WAYS TO ENGAGE IN GENUINE BIPARTISAN DIALOG

Imagine a large fissure cutting through the landscape, vast, deep and daunting. It runs through homes, families and friend groups, but the issue is not the fissure itself but how we go about building a bridge to meet our loved ones in the middle. How do we engage with someone we feel is on the other side of the political canyon? Melinda Burrell, Ph.D. had the same questions while working as a humanitarian aid worker and went on a journey to find meaningful ways to build the bridges we all seek. Mia Vinton spoke to her about her findings, which she presents in her dissertation, “Why would I want to talk to them? An exploration of perceptions of talking across political divides” (Nova Southeastern University).

According to Dr. Burrell, there are many obstacles to bridging political divides, but the most prevalent one is the use of vastly different sources that provide different “facts” around the same incident. She also observed that most people want to engage in the bipartisan conversation, but are fearful of the outcome. Once we recognize that we may be coming from different places and with different agendas, we can begin the process of open dialogue with the goal of meaningful engagement. Below are Dr. Burrell’s tips for talking across the political divide.

- **Set ground rules for the conversation.** Agree to listen with genuine curiosity, and allow for both sides to feel respected and heard.
- **Enter the conversation with realistic expectations.** Do not engage to change minds, but to gain understanding.
- **Enter the conversation through a shared belief or common ground.** Maintain a mindset of agreement and shared sentiment, not conflict.
- **Use thoughtful questions.** Look to gain deeper understanding through questions, and avoid “gotcha” questions or comments.
- **Build trust by sharing stories and experiences** to humanize each point of view.
- **Stay calm.** People have the tendency to see their identities and value systems reflected in their ideologies, so that when someone disagrees with their ideology, they feel personally attacked. Remind yourself that the focus is on ideologies, stay calm, and take deep breaths and pauses when necessary.
- **Leave the conversation if it devolves into targeted, personal attacks.** For some of us, our ideology *is* deeply tied to our identity, as in the case of racial justice for Black, Indigenous and other people of color. If your conversation partner is not willing to listen to your lived experiences, walk away.
- **Leave the door to future conversations open.** Even after an unsuccessful conversation, consider keeping the lines of communication open if doing so is not harmful to your wellbeing. Reaffirm the relationship, appreciate even the difficult conversations, and express your interest in future dialogue.

Ultimately, a successful dialogue requires each person to step outside of their own perspective, and empathize with the position of the other. While the process can be difficult, speaking your truth is power. We all must work to build our personal bridge across the fissure that separates our ideologies in a healthy and constructive way, for the sake of ourselves and the causes we believe in.

WORRIED ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION? [CLICK HERE FOR RESOURCES.](#)

NOVEMBER HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

November is **National Native American Heritage Month**, which celebrates the history and contributions of Native Americans.

The **National Day of Mourning** is an annual protest organized since 1970 by Native Americans of New England on the fourth Thursday of November, the same day of Thanksgiving in the United States.

Date(s) observed: Nov. 22, 2020

The 2nd week of November is **Trans Awareness Week**.

Transgender Day of Remembrance was established in 1998 to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia and to raise awareness of the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

Date(s) observed: Nov. 20, 2020

Holiday with significant work restriction

Diwali (*Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain*)

Diwali, the Hindu “festival of lights,” is an extremely popular holiday for multiple religions throughout southern Asia. Diwali extends over five days and celebrates the victory of good over evil. The Times of India describes Diwali as “a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously sanctioned celebration of the simple.”

Fireworks, oil lamps, and sweets are common, making this a favorite holiday for children. The lamps are lit to help the goddess Lakshmi find her way into people’s homes.

Date(s) observed: Nov. 14, 2020

Faculty and Supervisors:

Avoid scheduling important deadlines, events, and activities on this date.



[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOLIDAYS YEAR ROUND.](#)