

Self and Collective Care: Parenting & Family Wellbeing During the Holidays

Across many cultures and faith traditions, the spring season includes significant holidays and observances—such as Lunar New Year; Ash Wednesday and Lent; Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr; the Bahá'í Fast and New Year; Holi; Nowruz; Purim and Passover; and Easter. For many refugees and forcibly displaced families, these moments can carry both meaning and complexity, especially in the context of ongoing uncertainty, loss, and stress.

Why This Matters

Many communities we are a part of and serve are navigating a time of heightened fear, instability, and systemic pressures. This moment coincides with the spring season, which holds many significant cultural and religious holidays across traditions. While these holidays can increase emotional, financial, and caregiving demands—particularly for families already under strain—they can also offer powerful opportunities for connection, reflection, and renewal.

During times like these, it is essential to name both the weight people are carrying and the small, accessible ways individuals and families can care for themselves and one another, especially during moments of cultural significance. When caregivers and providers attend to their own wellbeing, they are better equipped to remain mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually present for children, loved ones, and their broader communities.

As spring arrives, many people are seeking ways to restore and replenish themselves individually and collectively. For some, this may coincide with new parenting chapters, shifting family roles, or changing routines. Spring holidays often invite both coming together and turning inward—gathering in community while also engaging in reflection, prayer, or meaning-making. In times of adversity, these practices can feel harder to access, yet the need for grounding, healing, and connection is often greatest.

Reframing small, familiar acts that are within our control—while still honoring traditions, rituals, and celebrations—can help us and other families experience moments of calm, comfort, and hope. Even modest, intentional practices can serve as anchors of resilience, a reminder that renewal is possible, even in uncertain times.

Below are suggested approaches you can draw on personally and share with the families you work alongside. These ideas are intended to be flexible and adaptable, and we encourage you to tailor them in ways that resonate most with you and your communities. We also recognize that many strengths and practices already exist within individuals and communities you are a part of and serve, and exploring these practices can be a way for reinforcement and mutual learning. At the end of this article, you will also read reflections from community providers on this holiday season as well as find additional resources.

Embracing the “Extraordinary Ordinary”

Even in difficult times, small, everyday acts can help families and communities stay connected, grounded, and hopeful.

Reflection, Contemplation and Gratitude

Encourage gentle practices that invite slowing down and being in the present without judgement. These can be done individually or shared as a family:

- a. Prayer, mindfulness, meditation, journaling and reflecting
- b. Dreaming or visioning together about hopes, intentions, and values
- c. Creating a list of what you are grateful for and everyday blessings (or a list of people you want to pray for and/or hold in your heart)
- d. Creating a family or cultural memory journal with favorite memories, stories, drawings, and photos
- e. Saying affirmations in the morning to anchor in hope and resilience
- f. Taking a nature walk and noticing seasonal changes

Provider Note: Inviting family members to share ideas with one another can create a space for listening and connection

Setting and modeling healthy boundaries

Holidays can increase emotional and practical demands. Support yourself and other caregivers and families in reflecting on what loads you/they are carrying and what you/they may need to do to protect one's wellbeing by:

- a. Limiting exposure to distressing news or media
- b. Avoiding overcommitment and unrealistic expectations
- c. Slowing down and focusing on one task at a time
- d. Communicating needs and boundaries with loved ones, schools, workplaces and community partners
- e. Asking for help when needed; reinforce shared responsibility and decision-making
- f. Practicing self-care and kindness towards ourselves - think of self-care as its own act of worship and devotion and model the importance of filling your own cup to your children

Provider Note: Encourage age-appropriate conversations with children about changes, stressors, or boundaries, emphasizing safety and reassurance

Maintaining flexible routines, traditions and rituals

Predictable but flexible daily rhythms can be regulating for children and families during periods of increased activity and stress. This can be done by:

- a. Prioritizing sleep, rest, and nourishment
- b. Continuing reflective practices, meditation, or prayer

- c. Honoring holiday rituals in simplified or adapted ways (e.g., small and simple decorations, cooking a favorite dish, visiting a place of worship, etc.)
- d. Practicing small acts of kindness and generosity (i.e., offering a smile to someone passing by, helping a neighbor with a task, etc.)

Creating space for moments of play and connection

When children and caregivers take time to play or do activities together, it increases connection and makes space for important conversations and healing. Consider activities such as:

- a. Reading or reciting familiar or family stories or songs of faith, resilience and hope
- b. Preparing nourishing and comforting foods and drinks and eating meals together
- c. Listening, singing, or dancing to traditional or cherished songs
- d. Watching a beloved movie together
- e. Playing a game or doing a puzzle as a family

By honoring traditions in flexible, manageable ways and prioritizing wellbeing alongside responsibility, individuals and communities can nurture resilience during times of stress and uncertainty. Ultimately, caring for ourselves and one another—through the “extraordinary ordinary”—is a vital source of strength and healing.

Community Providers on Parenting through Self and Collective Care During the Holidays:

Community providers who are navigating parenting, caregiving, and cultural traditions alongside uncertainty and responsibility offer their reflections on the season and how small, intentional rituals can sustain families, strengthen identity, and nurture resilience during the holiday season.

Heba H (Director, Campaigns and Partnership, New York):

“In seasons meant for joy, it’s easy to feel the weight of what we carry alongside the expectations of what we want to create for our children and families. Over time, I’ve come to see self-care and caregiving as deeply interconnected—I can’t meaningfully offer one without tending to the other. And I’ve also learned to reexamine what celebration really requires, and to let go of the pressure to make it expansive. In uncertain times, I have learned that celebration can be quiet but powerful: gathering, grounding ourselves in what matters, injecting simple joys for my daughter and creating steadiness for one another.”

Nazi T (Women’s Resilience Center Facilitator, California):

“For me, Ramadan is about slowing down, keeping a routine, being mindful, and balancing spiritual and everyday practices. I replace scrolling with reading or journaling, spending time with family, and engage with my community. These routines help me care for myself and show up for others, even during uncertain times.”

Dr. Omar A (Deputy Director, Resettlement Programs, Georgia):

"During this time of holidays this month and in the months that follow, caring for our families begins with caring for ourselves. Self-care is not selfish; it is how we sustain the strength, patience, and compassion our families and communities rely on. As we move through celebrations, gatherings, and sometimes moments of stress or reflection, it is important to pause, breathe, and create space for rest and connection.

Whether it's setting healthy boundaries, leaning on our support systems, practicing gratitude, or creating small traditions that bring comfort and joy, these intentional acts help us stay grounded. Even in challenging times, we can choose presence, kindness, and hope. Collective care starts at home when we nurture our own wellbeing, we strengthen our families and build a more connected, resilient community in the months ahead."

Malalai S (Community Wellness Supervisor, California):

"As a parent, I try to manage many day-to-day challenges and uncertainties while protecting my children from carrying burdens that are too heavy for them. At 12 years old, they are still learning how to understand and regulate their emotions, so even when I feel overwhelmed or sad, I try my best to remain calm and present for them.

I especially cherish the month of Ramadan. It gives us intentional time to slow down, reconnect as a family, break our fast together, pray, reflect, and practice patience and gratitude. These moments of togetherness and spiritual grounding help me reset and find strength, even during uncertain times.

As an immigrant parent, I also navigate many questions from my children—why their school, teachers, and classmates may not understand fasting, or why Eid is not recognized as a holiday. I often wish there were greater awareness and acknowledgment of these important celebrations so that our children feel seen, respected, and included. Inclusion and cultural understanding can make a meaningful difference in a child's sense of belonging and pride in their identity.

For me, Ramadan is not only about fasting—it is about resilience, community, mindfulness, and modeling emotional strength and compassion for my children."

Lila S (Deputy Director, Measurement and Data Analysis, Missouri):

"Balancing work, parenting, and fasting during Ramadan is exhausting. Yet Ramadan also brings the very things that sustain me: the warmth of my beautifully diverse community, sharing traditions with my little ones, and cooking the foods of my Palestinian ancestors. Watching my son run freely through the mosque with other children reminds me how much our families need spaces of belonging and joy. Each night when we turn on our Ramadan

lights, I'm reminded that light always returns. Calling my mother and mother-in-law to perfect the recipes passed down from their mothers connects me to the strength of the women in our family, who have always nourished both body and soul. In many ways, Ramadan arrives exactly when we need it most—inviting us to slow down, reconnect, and care for ourselves and one another."

Sara D (Learning and Impact Advisor, New York):

"Nowruz is the spring new year celebrated across Iran and Central Asia. For many, it involves time with family, large gatherings, traditions, and reconnecting with relatives you may not have spoken with in a while. It's a joyful holiday, but the pace of celebrations can also be a lot. I try to build in a little quiet time each day to recharge—maybe a solo walk or a slow morning. It also helps to have allies: my cousin and I can exchange a quick look across the room as a signal that one of us may need a moment to step away and take a breather."

Kelly M (Mental Health Counselor, Washington):

"In these uncertain times, my family has experienced some of the destabilization on a personal level as well as feeling solidarity with families experiencing hardship. Part of celebrating Easter for us is being able to hold onto the hope of creating peace and kindness for our family and others. Sometimes the small things we do in our homes and communities create the ripples we need in our world to give that chance to others. There are days when doing just one good thing gives me a sense of peace. Continuing to help others and seeing that same spirit in my colleagues and other helpers, helps me hold onto the light that is in all of us and a hope for a better day for our children."

Additional Resources

- (Picture Book List, Last updated March 2026) [Holidays for Different Communities](#)
- (New Children's Book Lists) [Addressing Distance, Distress, and Separation](#)
- (Resources) Boston Children's Hospital [Coping in Times of Uncertainty](#)