

The Self Care Advent Calendar

This calendar has been a tool I've used to sustain my body and soul throughout a bustling, stressful season. Read numbers 1-5 first, and then treat the rest of the list like a grab bag of activities to choose as you heart needs.

1. **Pick a passage of Scripture to meditate on for the advent season.** Focusing on going deep into one spiritual concept sometimes yields more fruit than a devotional with a new topic every day. Anchor your heart to look towards Christ. Some potential ideas:
 - Luke Chapter 1-56, Mary and Elizabeth. This is a beautiful passage about faith, encouragement and submitting to God's plan.
 - Psalm 103. A beautiful exposition of God's love and the benefits of following him.
 - John Chapter 15-16. Some of Jesus's final words to the disciples, and some of his most comforting, touching promises.
 - Matthew 5: 3-10. These are some of the most famous words of Jesus.
2. Consider your typical Christmas traditions.... write them down if you choose. Then consider which ones you can let go of this year. See if you can find gratitude for this opportunity to reset your traditions for the future.
3. Reflect on the last two years' Christmas, when Covid was deeply affecting our daily lives. What things did you have to give up that you are grateful you can reintroduce to your life? Also consider what you cut out, and decide if some of the things you let go of can stay gone!
4. Choose a few TV shows, movies or special series you want to make sure to watch. Pick those that will make you feel uplifted. Watching or reading familiar stories calms the nervous system. I am working my way through Call the Midwife's Christmas specials.
5. Go to a health food store and buy yourself a **probiotic** (Acidophilus and or Apple cider vinegar daily) and a good **B-vitamin**. Take them EVERY day.
6. **Say no to impulse-buy stocking stuffers. Save** that money to make something in your life easier, for a treat that will be more satisfying, or to bless a stranger (like giving a big tip to someone who serves you).
7. **Go for a walk**, and leave your phone at home.
8. **Cook something easy and healthy in your slow cooker.** Live off leftovers for a day afterwards. (See www.themagicalslowcooker.com for great ideas.)
9. Visit Target or the drugstore beauty aisle and buy a few face masks or hair masks. Use them as needed. If budget permits, buy a few extra and **deliver them to neighbors** with a note that says, "Happy holidays. Take care!"

10. Call friends you usually try to squeeze in during December and **plan to get together in January or February instead.**
This will give you something to look forward to and take the pressure off this month.
11. Spend a little time with your BEST friend(s), someone you feel very safe with and for whom you don't have to perform.
Bundle up for a walk so you can get in some exercise and be safe.
12. **Therapy.** Give yourself the gift of someone to listen to you. If you don't have a therapist, ask a friend if she'd like to swap listening sessions. One day it gets to be all about her; the next day, it's all about you.
13. **Married? Do a simple date night, and hold hands.** If you're single, do an outdoor coffee date with a friend. Walk around your neighborhood and find your favorite Christmas lights. Say thank you to those neighbors who have brought you cheer.
14. **Take a day off from all things Christmas.** No tasks, no gifts, no cards, no movies, no Christmas music.
15. **Take a detox bath.** Add a cup of Epsom salt, half a cup of baking soda, and a few drops of lavender essential oil.
16. Attend a **Blue Christmas service** or a prayer service where you can be comforted for losses you are grieving.
17. **Say no** to at least one thing you're asked to do. "No," is a complete sentence. Or say, "I'd love, but I can't."
18. Look at your To-do list. **Cross one thing off.**
19. **Do something silly** or something that makes you laugh. Share it on Instagram to make us laugh too.
20. Take 30 minutes to text an encouraging message to a few close friends. All the better if you pray first, asking God who needs to hear from you and what words would build them up today.
21. Order take-out from somewhere healthy and delicious. **Tip generously.**
22. **Ask for help.** Don't try to do everything you have to do alone – not the dishes, the laundry, the work project, taking out the trash, processing emotions. Someone can help you.
23. Time to redeem that money you saved all month for your treat or generous gift.
24. Make a list of **12 things you're thankful** for and tell someone at least six of them.
25. On December 26, don't take the decorations down. Nap.