

A red rectangular graphic with a white border. At the top center is a small icon of a dog and person in a heart. Below it, the text "Holiday Survival Guide" is written in a white, cursive font. In the center is a photograph of a small brown French Bulldog puppy wearing a red and white Santa hat, sitting on a red and white striped gift box. The background is filled with more wrapped gifts and Christmas decorations. Below the photo, the text "THE HOLISTIC PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO MANAGE THE HOLIDAYS WITH YOUR DOG" is written in white, all-caps, sans-serif font.

Holiday Survival Guide

THE HOLISTIC PARTNERSHIP APPROACH
TO MANAGE THE HOLIDAYS
WITH YOUR DOG

♡ Partnership *Practice*

Holiday Survival Guide

Understanding and Empathy

- a. Sensory Overload of the Holiday Season...**
- b. Sounds - Smells - Sights
- c. Changed Routines
- d. Busy Schedules
- e. Baseline arousal threshold is high already
- f. Doesn't take much to put your dog over
- g. Over-arousal higher, triggered easier, more excitable. Meltdowns, outbursts.
- h. Shutdowns. Refusal or resistance to do something, or go somewhere.

Less is More

- a. Reduce holiday 'stuff' ... decorating, visitors, parties, smells, sights and sounds. Esp for sensitive/anxious dogs.
- b. Alter Expectations. Be empathic and understanding ... and allow your dog's needs, feelings and perspectives to guide your choices. "perfect" is not realistic.
- c. "Dogs are family too"
- d. Plan safe retreats for your dog into any holiday gathering.
- e. Remember to BREATHE! :)

Planning for Gatherings

- a. If you are hosting the gathering, try to do as much in advance as possible (cooking etc) ...

and/or be sure to have a family member or a dog walker maintain your dog's routine and get exercise that day.

b. Planning and Preparation is crucial.

- c. Phrases to say in the moment...
(as your dog's advocate)
- d. For judgement of your dog's behavior
- e. For requests to pet, play and feed
- f. For your retreat/safe place and your Exit strategy
- g. Practice saying them ahead of time

Prepare Your Holiday Survival Kit

- a. Thundershirt - puzzle toys - toys for 'find-it' games - chew/bones - your dog's fav treats - calming touch - essential oils - rescue remedy - cbd oil
- b. You're the guest? Bring water, bowl, food for meal times, poo pickup, leash, retreat-making supplies.

Routines

- a. Stay as close to your normal daily routine as possible.
- b. Be sure to exercise your dog to avoid pent-up energy (without over-arousing)
- c. Provide sensory break or brain break throughout the day:
- d. Movement - Calming touch - Puzzle game - Nose Work - Name Game/Dance
- e. Be sure to include outdoor time

Holiday Food and Guests

- a. Have your own treats available
- b. Communicate guidelines to others: do not feed table food etc.
- c. Keep your dog away from purses and coats! Gum and mints often contain deadly xylitol.

Dog Safety

- a. Collar with ID at all times.
- b. Dogs have no access to rooms with outside doors (ie: front door) Baby Gates! Leashes!
- c. Consider a sign inviting guests in without ringing or knocking to minimize disturbance.
- d. Assign a person to Door Duty and one to Dog Duty.

Retreat and Management

- a. **Create a safe room for Retreat** for your dog.
- b. Room? Do Not Disturb sign on door. Keep kids out.
- c. **Crate or expen?** Be sure your dog feels like it's a 'retreat' and can nap and recover.
- d. Watch closely for signs your dog needs to retreat for a while.
- e. **Other dogs?** Does not mean your dog must play, hang out or socialize. Let your dog be your guide. Be sure there are safe retreat spaces for all dogs.
- f. Baby gates, expens, crates ... and Leashes make reasonable choices for management and retreat.
- g. **Dog Sitter.** If you cannot easily do so yourself, consider have one member of the family (or hire a sitter) be on 'dog duty' to keep your dog safe, pottied, and to handle meet and greets...and to take to safe retreat.

- h. You can have a 'team' that can rotate shifts.
- i. **Meet and Greets:** strictly supervised by someone competent and responsible.
- j. Teach your dog to greet friends and family politely. On leash is best in most cases.
- k. Practice in advance!
- l. Only if your dog wants to. Even so, watch for signs of needing some retreat time.
- m. **If your dog strongly dislikes visitors...**
- n. Consider NOT hosting any holiday gatherings.
- o. Create a safe retreat space for your dog. Perhaps crated in the car or garage; In the basement; In a room furthest away from the activity.
- p. Perhaps one person can stay in the safe retreat room with your dog during the gatherings. At least until your dog is relaxed.
- q. Be sure to plan for this in advance, and teach your dog to love their safe retreat.
- r. Practice with a visitor in advance.

What are your ideas for 'less is more' ... minimizing the sensory overload for your dog:

What are your key phrases that you'll use in response to judgement of your dog's behavior; requests to pet, play and feed your dog; for when you need to take your dog to his/her retreat:

What will you include in your Holiday Survival Kit?

What are the key routines that you will maintain to help your dog during the holidays?

What are your ideas for Safety, and managing the 'front door' access and the polite greeting of guests?

How will you create a safe retreat for your dog? At home? And when visiting?

What are the signs to watch for when your dog needs to 'retreat' for a while?

Will you recruit help to manage your dogs during gatherings? What/who/how?

How will you manage Meet and Greets? Does your dog need training, and if so, what is your plan to provide that training?

If your dog strongly dislikes visitors ... how will you handle that? Where is the best place and what is the best management for your dog if you do have visitors? List some ideas.

How will you create a safe retreat, and what is your plan for teaching your dog to love being there? Will you recruit a helper to stay with your dog while there are visitors?

Your Notes...

Lessons in Partnership

Ideas, Experiences and Wisdom from the Heart of Partnership

What is your biggest Takeaway from this Class?

How can you apply that learning to your partnerships with your dogs?

What is the first Baby Step you can take? And the next?