



The how-to guide for
chaos-free celebrations!

RENÉ BROOKS

Copyright



This book is purely informational and is not intended to diagnose or treat any condition.

Copyright Black Girl, Lost Keys 2020

Thinking of You



We at BGLK are holding space in our hearts for the loved ones of those who have fallen ill or lost their lives to COVID-19, and for anyone who is in mourning this holiday season. You are not alone.

Table of contents

1

Clean Up

Tidy up the house for the holidays.

2

Show Up

Making it through holiday events.

3

Shop Up

Grabbing those gifts!

4

Holidays When Everything Is Different

Creating something beautiful and new from adversity.



Black Girl Lost Keys is a christmas baby!

Six years ago, I sat down on my couch and began to write the very first post on my blog, not knowing how it would go. Since starting the blog, I have been amazed at how it has grown and enjoyed how many new people I've met and experiences I've had because of this one action.

We believe that to manage ADHD, we need to revamp our entire lives. Sometimes, it is just as simple as sitting down to try something new. I'll leave you with this picture of me from that very first Christmas when I contemplated how much of a pain in the ass holidays with ADHD are - My opinion has only slightly changed.

René Brooks





Clean Up:
These Halls Look
Decked

Cleaning for the holidays is just a bit different

Sure, we want our houses to look clean every day of the year, but do we have time? No. There are more pressing things to procrastinate on other than perfecting our homes.



Is there any sound more fear-inducing than the crunch of gravel on the driveway or the car door slamming, heralding the arrival of a guest you don't feel prepared for? I don't think so. As an ADHD woman, I have long battled with housekeeping. And I've hit a balance. I have the house clean enough for me.

Having said that, when it comes to the holidays, I'm a lot like everybody else in the sense that I want it to look PHENOMENAL. I mean, I want it to look like Pinterest Perfection. Every time I try it, I wind up completely ruining my holiday with my anxieties over everything not being JUST right.

So how do we achieve balance here? Remember, balance looks different for everyone. But everyone knows there's a general standard of what looks good and what doesn't, so let's talk it out together.



Happiness is what really matters

The holidays are supposed to be about fun, aren't they? And doesn't that mean that in the course of fun the house is just going to get messed up anyway? What if we dropped the pretense and let the house be what it is, with a little extra shine and polish? A full-scale, all-out, baseboard-scrubbing, closet-cleaning extravaganza that leaves you too tired to go on helps no one. Nobody is looking in that closet. If they're that nosey, they shouldn't be there.

Does that feel wrong? It did to me the first time I considered it. Holidays, when I was growing up, were just that: LOTS of preparation and running and cleaning and all of that. But guess what? Holidays are about happiness and sharing too, and if I have to do baseboards, I'm not going to be happy.

If you've read or heard about my other workbook, "Everything You Need To Completely Clean With ADHD," you know by now that I am a big believer in meeting the minimum level of clean. What is that? It concentrates heavily on you cleaning up in a way that is meaningful to you. That means if socks in the corner don't bother you, don't stress over them being there. As long as the house is safe, sanitary, and you can find your stuff (gifts in this case!) then you're in the clear. I REALLY want you to take as much of this into your holiday as you can.

Having said that, you're not the only one who wants the house to look special for the holidays. Spruce things up, but remember that a clean home is not the only component in a successful holiday. It's one house, and it is only for one day. Don't hang your holiday happiness on the way your house looks.

Focus your efforts on the places you'll be spending your time: rooms like the kitchen, the dining room, the living room, and the family room. Concentrate on the holiday high-traffic rooms, the ones you'll really spend the time in. Ignore the rest.

*"lived in with
love is better
than perfect
and pissed off."*



Holiday Minimum Clean

LIKE REGULAR MINIMUM, BUT FANCY!



SANITARY

What rooms are you using most often? How will they be used? Who will be in them? This will guide you.



SAFE

Heaters and plugs and lights and wax warmers, etc., can all be holiday hazards to watch out for. Check for frayed cords.



STUFF EASILY FOUND

For god's sake, don't hide the presents in more than one spot. You will NOT remember where they are. Leave creative hiding to the omnipotent.



EXTRA POLISH

Which rooms are you going to take pictures in? Those are the places to perfect. Remember, a little lived in with love is better than perfect and pissed off.

Cleaning goals

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT?

Everyone has their own opinions about what makes a clean room clean. Here is your chance to write down your goals so you can focus on the parts of the house that matter and ignore the rest. No, really, the rest will still be there when the holiday is done. Ignore it.

GOAL #1

ACTION STEPS:

1:

2:

3:

GOAL #2

ACTION STEPS:

1:

2:

3:

GOAL #3

ACTION STEPS:

1:

2:

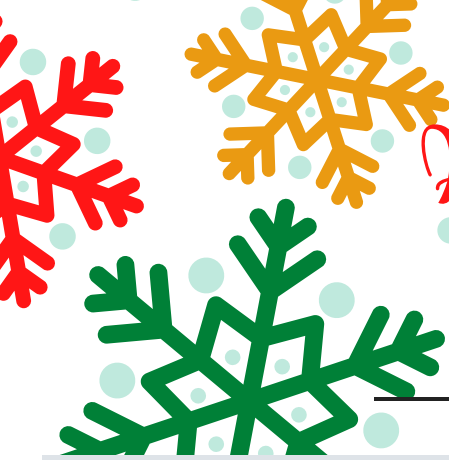
3:

Holiday Cleaning To Do List

WHICH ROOMS ARE HOLIDAY HIGH-TRAFFIC ROOMS?

WHAT AREAS IN THOSE ROOMS NEED TIDYING?

WHAT WILL KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED AS YOU CLEAN?



Holiday Chore List

Week BEFORE the
Holiday

MONDAY:

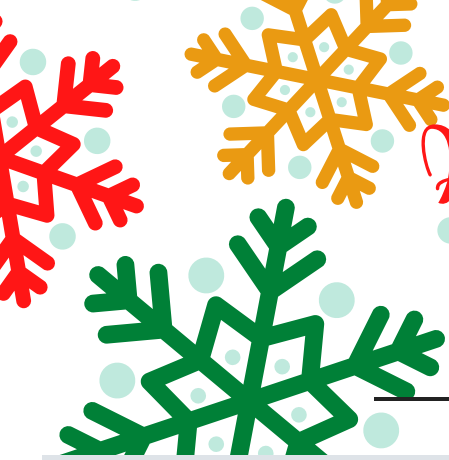
TUESDAY:

WEDNESDAY:

THURSDAY:

FRIDAY:

SAT/SUN:



Holiday Chore List

Week OF The
Holiday

MONDAY:

TUESDAY:

WEDNESDAY:

THURSDAY:

FRIDAY:

SAT/SUN:

Holiday Safety Hazards

KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

FRAYED WIRES: Check the cords on your electrical appliances.

FIRE: Leave no flames unattended, and keep them well away from flammable materials.

THE FLOOR: Scissors, wrapping paper, and tape with sharp edges, along with cords, should stay off the floor to avoid a trip hazard.

TREES: Holiday trees should be at least 3 feet away from heat sources and not blocking doorways.

POISON PLANTS: Holiday plants can be poisonous, please keep them from children and pets.

LADDERS: Please be cognizant if using ladders to be sure they are on flat surfaces.

Are there any safety hazards to be aware of?

How will you keep yourself safe this holiday season?

Are there any other safety concerns we didn't list?



*A good conscience
is a continual
Christmas*

Benjamin Franklin



Show up:
Family, Friends,
and Gatherings

I hate all forms of secret santa

My entire adult life, I have spent defending myself from participating in secret Santa, white elephant, or whatever name they call it now. I live in mortal fear of forgetting the gift, so I avoid it like the plague.

For many of us with ADHD, the part of the holiday we hate most of all is the socializing. We dislike the parties and the questions from intrusive coworkers. Needing to show up in a million places on time and remembering to bring a gift (that you may be regifting) shoved into a holiday gift bag you found in the attic is stressful. This is big-time stress for us at a time that is supposed to be a celebration, and I for one, don't need it.

Just like cleaning, there has to be a balance to making our way through these holiday events. A big part of reducing this stress is as simple as guarding your yes! You don't have to feel guilty for not wanting to be at an event. You don't have to buy a stranger a gift that may be an awful letdown for them.

Curate your holiday experiences and you may find showing up a little easier than it was last year.





Family Gatherings

Many of us spend a great deal of time trying to avoid the awkwardness of family gatherings. The intrusive questioning, the comparison to other relatives of a similar age, and the activation of bad memories can make for anything but a gathering full of merriment.

When you're making your way to family gatherings, plan in advance for the challenges you may face. Consider thinking over what may be said to you that could be upsetting, and planning your response in advance. Come up with an escape plan where you move into some unoccupied room in the house to cool off if necessary. In this way, you won't risk blowing your top.

When you're not dodging your family members, you could be stuck with the friend group where you feel especially awkward or at the employee party where the people you don't necessarily fit in with are partying hard. If you don't feel comfortable with them at work, why would you feel comfortable eating and drinking with them for fun?

We know that there is a certain necessity to socialize in order to appear polite. If you never come to the office party you could appear standoffish. If you don't link up with the friend group in order to get to know them better, how can you begin to fit in?

Take the pressure off of yourself. We look at these events like situations that can make or break us based on how we behave. Instead, try to reframe the way you see it. What if it isn't an event where you're going to say the wrong thing, but an opportunity to learn more about people? Even if it doesn't go well, it is just another opportunity to practice your skills. One event isn't the end of the world.

"One event won't make or break you!"



Avoiding Holiday Conflicts

COPING WITH LESS-THAN-POSITIVE- ENCOUNTERS



BE COURTEOUS

Whether it is an aging uncle or a cranky coworker, you need to keep things as courteous as you can.



WALK AWAY

When you can't remain courteous and firmness doesn't work, feel free to walk away. You don't deserve that.



BE FIRM

Courtesy does not mean being a doormat. Be firm with people if they violate your boundaries. A simple "I don't want to talk about that right now" is sufficient.



REMOVE YOURSELF

When all else fails, get the heck out of there. Remove yourself, and consider that person's attendance being a boundary for future events.

Holiday Boundaries Checklist

KEEPING VISITS SIMPLE

SAFE TOPICS: Decide beforehand what you're not willing to discuss.

THE FINE LINE: Everyone knows when they've had enough. It is ok to determine that boundary beforehand.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND: Sometimes past encounters can color current interactions. Be open to the idea that things are different.

DEAL BREAKERS: If there is someone there who often disrespects you, leaving immediately is an option.

BE HONEST: You don't have to keep quiet to keep the peace. You can be courteous and honest.

PLAN AHEAD: If you know who will be there, you know what your usual frustrations are with them. You can prep for those in advance.

What is your escape plan if things get too bad?

Who are your allies in keeping the peace?

How do you determine when you've had enough?

Difficult Person Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person who gets under your skin and plan ahead for your encounter with them. You CAN keep your cool, I promise.



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Pain points:

Goals for interactions:

How will you cope:

Difficult Person Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person who gets under your skin and plan ahead for your encounter with them. You CAN keep your cool, I promise.



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Pain points:

Goals for interactions:

How will you cope:

Difficult Person Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person who gets under your skin and plan ahead for your encounter with them. You CAN keep your cool, I promise.



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Pain points:

Goals for interactions:

How will you cope:



*Christmas day is
in our grasp so
long as we have
hands to clasp*

Dr Seuss



*Shop Up: Don't
get regifted*

*They say it's
the thought
that counts.
So does the
gift!*

Gift-giving requires executive functioning, and wow can that be a nightmare for the ADHD brain! How do we coordinate gifting well?

Is there anything better than watching someone light up when you've given them the perfect gift? When you have taken your time to brave the shops, wrap the gift and make it beautiful and show up in time to present it, it really warms the heart.

For many people, the gifts we give are a measurement of how much we care. Therefore when we get the gift wrong or worse, we forget them completely, it is awful. How do we explain this to the people in our lives who don't understand executive functioning issues?

Holiday gift-giving can be a little simpler when we approach the process with some understanding on both sides. There are a few ways to accomplish those goals. What is the best part of trying to find something that helps everyone? We all get to feel the joy.





Holiday Decorating and Grocery Shopping

Besides holiday gift shopping, there are two other shopping opportunities to consider: holiday decoration and grocery shopping. With all of these types of shopping to consider, you are running a high risk for overspending, over-stimulation, and frustration.

How do you handle being in the store? Is it overwhelming or invigorating? Does being around a bunch of shiny things make you want to shell out all your money or shove your wallet in your pocket and run? There is no right or wrong here. Our ADHD affects us all in different ways when it comes to shopping, and of course, it depends on whether we find the shopping experience stimulating or not, too. Many options are there to help you accomplish what you need to.

At this time of year, the temptation for many of us is to try to prove our love through what we are able to spend. Impulse spending can lead us to make more purchases than we ordinarily would or rack up additional debt.

We are folks who are prone to walking around without a particular plan and that can make for more of these mishaps. Consider creating a loose plan of some sort. It doesn't have to be a fully fleshed-out plan, just a bit of a direction to go in. When you have something to go on, the stimulation, the impulsivity, and the frustration have less of a chance of getting to you. I don't like lists as much as some people, but what I do enjoy, believe it or not, is visualizing what I would like someone's experience with my gift to be, and I go from there.

Remember: you don't have to go into debt to give people a beautiful holiday experience. You can hand make gifts, give the gift of experience or time spent (think making cookies together, reading a book together, spending a weekend together) and those things are priceless and treasured just like whatever monetary gift you're imagining would be. Remember, it doesn't matter if it is on sale if you can't afford to stretch the budget.

"It doesn't matter if it is on sale if you can't afford it!"



Spend Carefully

SHOPPING WITH CAUTION



TRACK ONLINE PURCHASES

Purchases can add up quickly, especially if you're shopping online. Be mindful of the number of online purchases, so you don't overspend.



IT'S A WRAP

Save yourself some time by letting someone else do the wrapping. Some stores still offer a gift wrapping service when you shop. [Click here](#) for a list.



SPRUCE UP THE DECORATIONS

I've been thinking about all new decorations, but I'm going to stretch it for another year by adding a few items to the old ones.



GROCERY SHOPPING

Going grocery shopping can be overstimulating, and if you get distracted by all the items you can overspend. Consider a grocery delivery service to keep it simple.

Easy Generic Gifts

HAVE SOMETHING ON HAND!

INSTRUCTIONS: Inevitably, we will forget SOMEBODY on our gift list. Here are some gifts you can have on hand for various age groups and people in your life.



Young Person

- Paint Set
- Board Game
- Video Game



Adult

- Gift Certificate
- A Comfy Robe
- A Great Bottle of Wine



Coworker

- Adult Coloring Book
- Treat Them To Lunch
- A High-Quality Pen



Acquaintance

- Board Game
- A Great Movie
- A Beautiful Journal

Why Am I Doing This?

When we are faced with challenges, it can be helpful to remember why we are doing something. What's your shopping why?

WHY AM I DOING THIS?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

WHO WILL THIS HELP?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

WHAT HOLIDAY MOMENT WILL REMIND YOU
IT WAS ALL WORTH IT?

Gift Recipient Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person whom you are planning to buy for, what they like and dislike, and if you have purchased a gift for them before. No pressure, just help for you to brainstorm a great present!



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Likes / Dislikes

Have you bought for them before?

Gift Ideas

Gift Recipient Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person whom you are planning to buy for, what they like and dislike, and if you have purchased a gift for them before. No pressure, just help for you to brainstorm a great present!



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Likes / Dislikes

Have you bought for them before?

Gift Ideas

Gift Recipient Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: List the person whom you are planning to buy for, what they like and dislike, and if you have purchased a gift for them before. No pressure, just help for you to brainstorm a great present!



Name:

location / age:

occupation:

Likes / Dislikes

Have you bought for them before?

Gift Ideas



*I don't think Christmas
is necessarily about
things. It's about being
good to one another.*

Carrie Fisher



*Holidays When
Everything Is Different.*

Life can change in an instant

Originally when I started the outline for this book, it was August, and none of us believed that we would be spending our holidays in quarantine. Life doesn't always present what we think it will.

As I sit writing this, we are still in the middle of our fight with COVID-19, but it is far from the only instance where our holidays are changed by circumstances out of our control. Life is held together by fragile bonds and anything can happen.

Some people are experiencing their first holiday without a loved one. Some are braving the holidays after a job loss. Some are sizing down after their children have left them with an empty nest.

It isn't that the celebration has to end, it is that maybe this one time you can't celebrate. It is valid to be in a place where you don't feel like celebrating. It is valid to celebrate differently because you feel like nothing will ever be the same. Honor whatever it is you're feeling as you proceed through this section.





Getting Creative

Celebrating without our families feels weird, but I have admired the creativity so many of us have shown during this time. We are creating zoom events, we are video chatting, we are sending special greetings through the mail. Some of you are showing up in person to wave to your loved ones outside of the windows and sing to them.

We are connecting in ways that we never had the time to before. Those of us with ADHD know how distracting and stimulating the outside world can be (that's why some of us miss it so much). I am hoping that you've come up with some creative ways to celebrate.

So many of the people who are grieving talk about potentially celebrating the first holiday without a loved one on Vacation. This will not be an option this year, and I have thought of all the people who will be having a hard time this holiday because of that.

If you are celebrating the holidays without someone you miss terribly, try these things to help cope:

- **Plan for the grief to come:** You're allowed to do something completely different if you'd like.
- **Create a new tradition honoring your loved one:** Maybe you can decorate in their favorite colors. Or watch one of their favorite movies, or recreate a recipe they always made well.
- **Take some me-time:** You may want to be alone, and that is totally ok.

We shape our experiences the way we want to. There is no right or wrong way to do the holiday. Give yourself the space you need to feel your feelings, honor the traditions you want to keep, and discard the ones that no longer serve you. The choices are all yours, and you are allowed to take your time.

*"Give yourself
The space you
need to feel your
feelings"*



Creating New Holiday Traditions

MAKE IT YOUR OWN



MIX IT UP

Don't be afraid to do something different. Try new cuisines. Make all of your gifts by hand. Play new holiday games.



KEEP IT SIMPLE

Some of the best celebrations and conversations happen because we keep it simple. You don't have to reinvent the wheel.



WORK TOGETHER

Especially in 2020, many of us are under pressure to make the holidays unique. Work together. Don't do it alone!



ENJOY YOURSELF

Fun. We get together and do all of these things for many reasons, one of them being fun. Try to keep fun at the forefront.

Does this tradition still serve me?

INSTRUCTIONS: "We've always done it this way" is a great explanation for a tradition, but that isn't a reason to keep it. Examine your holiday tradition and make certain it still serves you.

Who invented the tradition?

For instance: If you do things grandma's way to feel connected to her? Great. IF you hate her way and want to stop? Stop

Would anyone be hurt if you stopped? We are trying to celebrate, not do harm. Are there people who would be hurt if it wasn't done?

Do you enjoy the tradition? If you don't enjoy it, why are you doing it? If it is reverence, good. If it is unnecessary? Ditch it.

Is it a difficult task? Some traditions we keep alive even if they are difficult. Like a complicated recipe or ritual. Difficulty doesn't mean unnecessary.

WHY I'M LETTING THIS TRADITION GO:

WHY I WON'T LET THIS TRADITION GO:

What will be different

Write what you'll be doing different in the box below and work your way through these questions.

How will the difference affect me?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

How can I make this transition smooth?

What will be different

Write what you'll be doing different in the box below and work your way through these questions.

How will the difference affect me?

| | |
|---------|---------|
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |

How can I make this transition smooth?

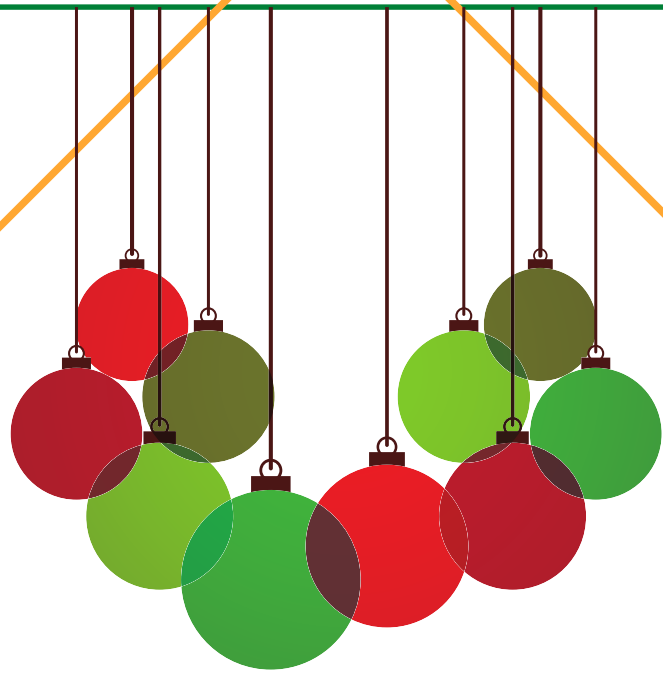
What will remain

Write what traditions will remain in the box below and work your way through these questions.

How will this enrich my life?

| | |
|---------|---------|
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |
| ■ _____ | ■ _____ |

What is especially important about this now?



*I am not going to die,
I'm going home like a
shooting star.*

Sojourner Truth

Happy
Holidays!

