

# The Holiday Escape Plan

It's a tough time of year for many folks. Here are ways to cope and have fun locally.

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FOR COAST WEEKEND

If Thanksgiving was any kind of preview, the holidays can be a difficult time. If you're nervous about Christmas and New Year's, here are some tips, tricks and treats for a positive holiday experience with help from Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

For starters, *don't compare.*

"My advice would be to never benchmark your holiday based on Facebook or Hallmark," Baker said. "Expectations themselves are the saboteur of any holiday."



Amy Baker

Accept life as it is and lower your expectations so as not to fall prey to the "social marketing of Facebook" and the like, she said.

In the event that:

## 1.) You self-criticize

Try self-compassion instead.

"Self-compassion is a mixture of being kind to yourself and recognizing what is human experience. All humans fail and make mistakes, and life experience is flawed and imperfect," Baker said. "If you can accept that, it may be less frustrating or painful when the family member says the awkward thing at the dinner table."

Picture it. "Now you get to experience human fallibility," she said.

Don't forget the **Christmas Eve Ugly Sweater Party** at Capricorn Pub and Fine Food 10 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24.

## 2.) Someone hurts your feelings, or you find yourself feeling angry

Head to **Youngs River Falls** and picture the words that person said cascading, crashing and floating away.

Alternatively, spend time with animals. Observe the elk contentedly grazing at the **Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area**.

Or go bowling at **Lower Columbia Bowl**. Enjoy the physical sensation of



ALEX PAJUNAS PHOTOS

Chilling mist from Youngs River Falls, mixed with below freezing temperatures, left logs and limbs weighed down by a thick coating of ice in this 2013 photo.

throwing something heavy and head-shaped down a long wooden alley.

In Germany around 400 A.D., bowling was seen as a sort of ritual to cleanse oneself of sins. In England in 1541, common workers could only bowl on Christmas. Combine the two and you have a recipe for holiday relief.

## 3.) You witness something awkward

"Exercise is proven to reduce anxiety and depression," Baker said.

Excuse yourself for a walk. We live in such a beautiful area that any walk



Bob Sturdevant, of Long Beach, Washington, looks to pick up another strike at Lower Columbia Bowl in this 2013 photo.

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