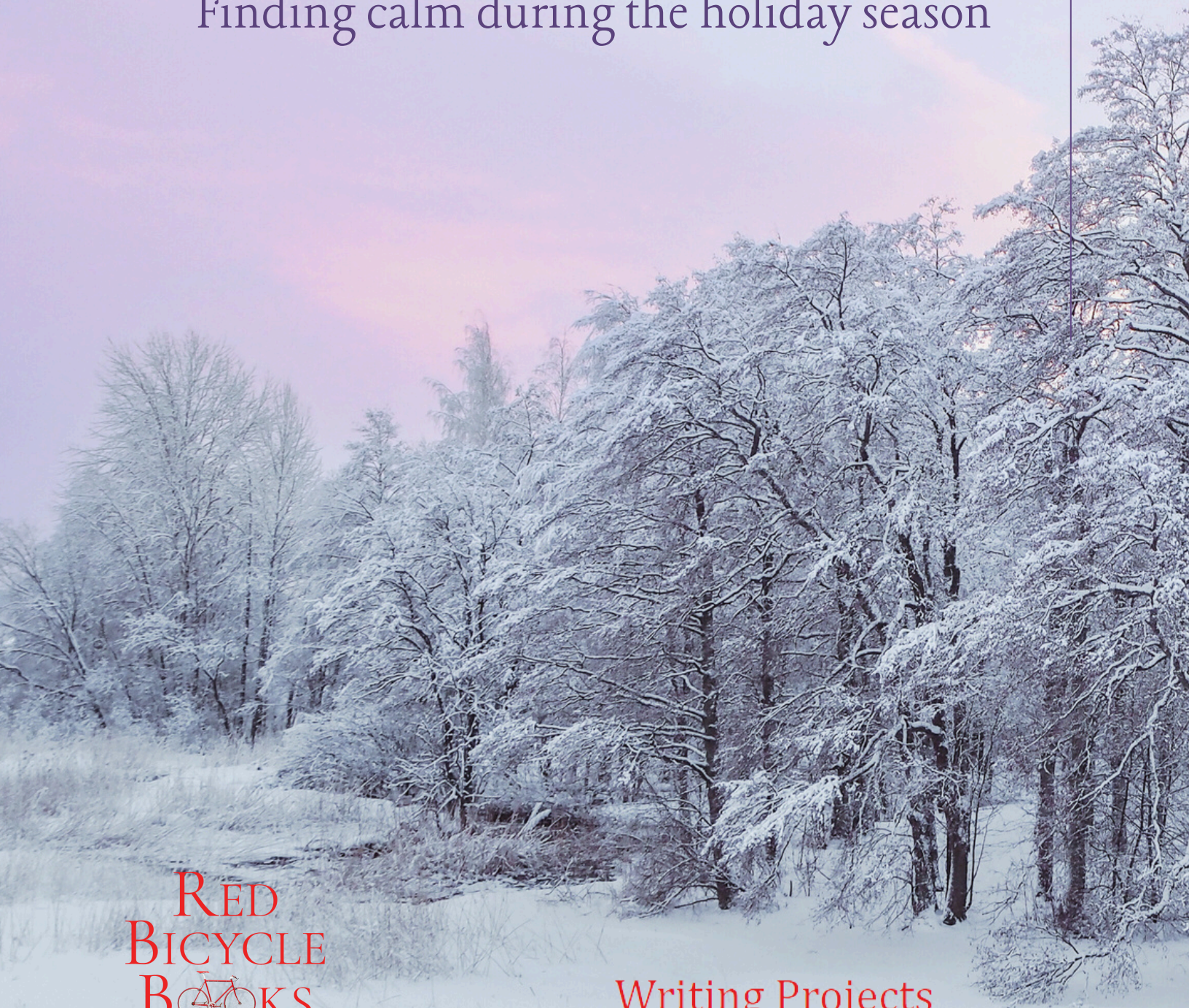
A Center of Peace

Finding calm during the holiday season



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Greetings, Friend!

No matter where you live in the world or what holidays you celebrate this time of year, this season is a reminder of busyness, preparing feasts, travel, finances, stress, and finding gratitude. The holidays also bring about a source of reflection—of ourselves, of our loved ones who are present, and those we lost.

This writing project is designed to take a journey within to surround you with peace and self-care during the highs and lows of this fast-paced season, finding appreciation and cheer in the moments. From managing realistic expectations to journal about what makes you sparkle, it's time to enjoy what this season means to you.

Wishing you a holiday season filled with miracles, love, and the happiness you deserve.

Happy holidays, peace, and love,



Victoria A. Witkewitz
Author & Founder
Red Bicycle Books, LLC

RED BICYCLE BOOKS PUBLISHING

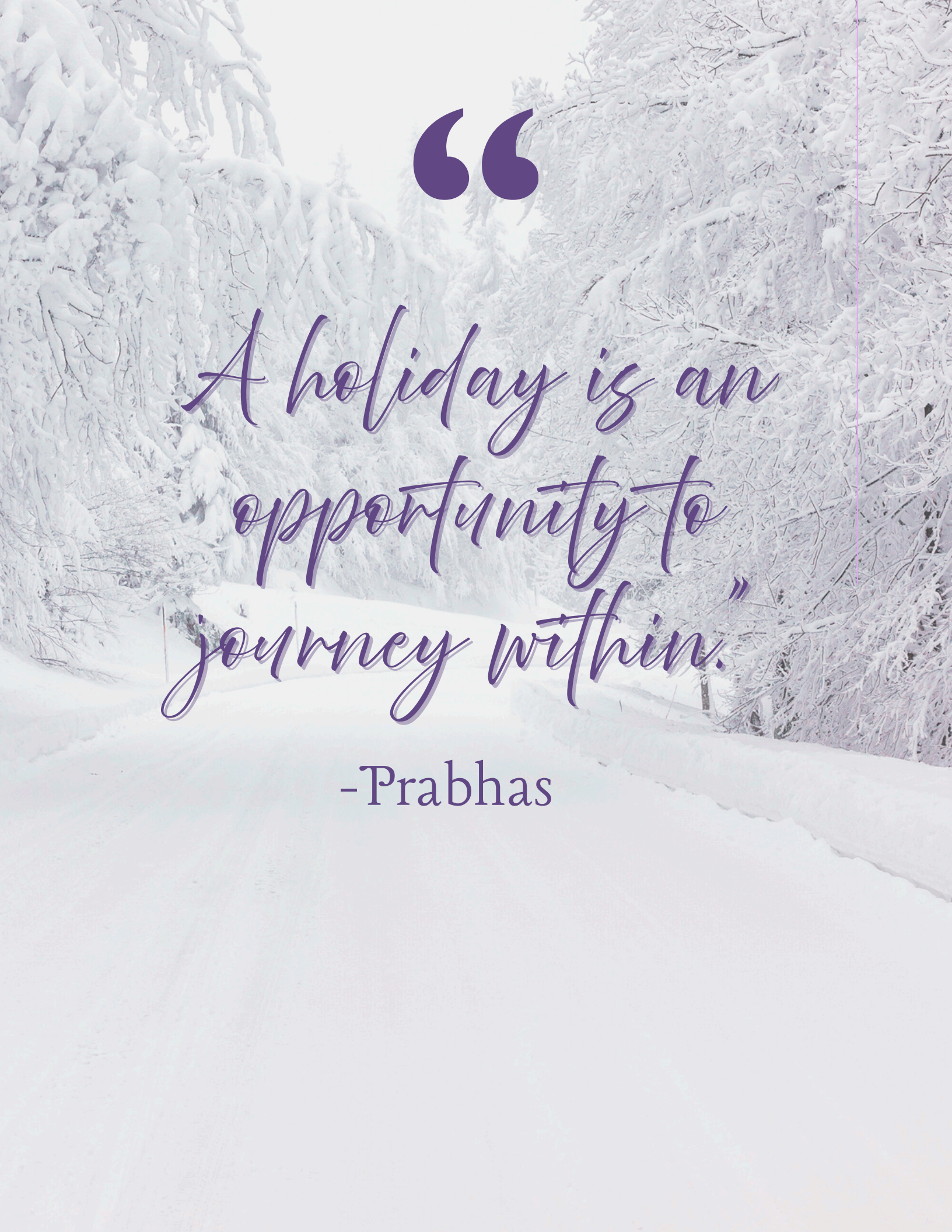
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Wishing you well



The holiday season can be a tough time of year for many of us. While this writing project strives to inspire positivity and peace, it is not designed to guarantee results or act as a substitute for medical or financial advice. The author is not a medical or financial professional. For concerns, always consult a professional. Your use of this writing project implies acknowledgement and acceptance of these terms.

Wishing you wellness, always.


“A holiday is an opportunity to journey within.”
-Prabhas

Locate your inner zen

Let's take a moment to be grateful. Place your hand on your heart. Close your eyes and take five slow and complete breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall with each inhale and exhale. Gently release what you are holding inside.

You are a part of this beautiful world. Like snow gently rests on a pine tree, embrace the peaceful feeling *you* created in this moment. Carry this with you every day. Enjoy the pause the present offers and remember you can receive this joyous gift at any moment through time. That's the magic of this time of year.



"Peace is its own reward."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Finding a deeper meaning in silence

While the holiday season can create additional demands, it's also a reminder of what is truly important. Focus on what this season means to you, not what it means to others or what we see on social media, or television. Store this at the core of your mindset as you lead up to that special day.

One of the best ways we can find meaning in our lives is by momentarily releasing the clutter. Messages, emails, and voicemails will always be there. Taking time to embrace silence helps to recenter what holds deep meaning for us. This is where gratitude shines.

Visit a place that brings you comfort and serenity. Spend a few moments closing your eyes and take in the sights and sounds. Listen to your intuition and let it guide you. On the next page, journal about your experience. Keep this reminder close.

"The peace you build always starts in this moment and the best gift you will receive each day, if you remember to open it."

-Victoria A. Witkewitz



A comforting place

Where _____

When _____

Sights I experienced

_____

_____

Sounds I experienced

_____

_____

What I felt

_____

_____

This place provides me peace and comfort because...

A season of self-care, self-love

During the holiday season, our precious time is further challenged. Prioritizing self-care is paramount to your well-being and vitality. Enjoy the memories this holiday season will create by remaining open, present, and feeling the flow without stagnating your energy.

Rest

Focus on rest. Take power naps in your day. *Do they work?* According to a Harvard Health Publishing article published in December 4, 2024, power naps between ten to thirty minutes can enhance mood, reduce fatigue, increase alertness and focus.

Water and exercise

Shifting from task to task, it's easy to become preoccupied. Remember to stay hydrated. Keep extra bottles of water with you while running errands. Follow your normal workout routine as closely as possible to maintain stamina and endurance, elevate your mood, and enhance wellness.

If you can't find peace, create it

Most of the time, we place extra pressure on ourselves, aiming for perfection. If you are hosting, nobody is going to question the pesky dust on the ceiling fan. Your company, smile, and presence are what they will remember the most.

Pause between the busyness. Take a few deep breaths to bring yourself back to center. Guide yourself in the exploration of self-love by reciting affirmations.

Remember, you are doing the best you can. You are in control. Everything will come together one day at a time.

Don't aim for perfection,
aim for the joy; happiness will follow.

The joy you create

Bringing joy outside yourself and to others is what the holiday season is centered around. You have the unique ability to experience joy regardless of your circumstances. Sometimes we need a friendly reminder of our resilience to accentuate the positives in our lives.

Our lives on Earth are on lease. We have a finite time to create experiences with friends and family. What can you do to make the special people in your life feel just that—special?

What brings me joy

How I bring joy to others

You are part of the season

The holidays encourage a greater emphasis of storytelling. From personal family stories to cultural heritage, recipes, and traditions that are passed down from multiple generations, become part of the season.

Think of at least two to three stories that resonate with you most at this time of the year that bring you happiness. This could be a childhood memory, a book, or a movie you enjoy watching that reminds you of the foundation of nostalgia. Print multiple copies of the next page. Write these pleasant memories and why they have special meaning to you. Position these thoughts as you prepare to navigate the holiday season.



"A story is part of my book of life,
and there are many endings I want to seek."
-Victoria A. Witkewitz

My holiday stories

Acts of kindness

Exploring acts of kindness can make us feel good about the season. The gift of giving is one of the most memorable things you can do for another person. Below are some ways you can lighten the load for someone else. Kindness starts with you.

Donate

Donation does not have to be considered only a monetary gesture. We can donate time, bake a pie for someone, shovel a driveway, or donate clothes. Where can you be of value?

Write a holiday card

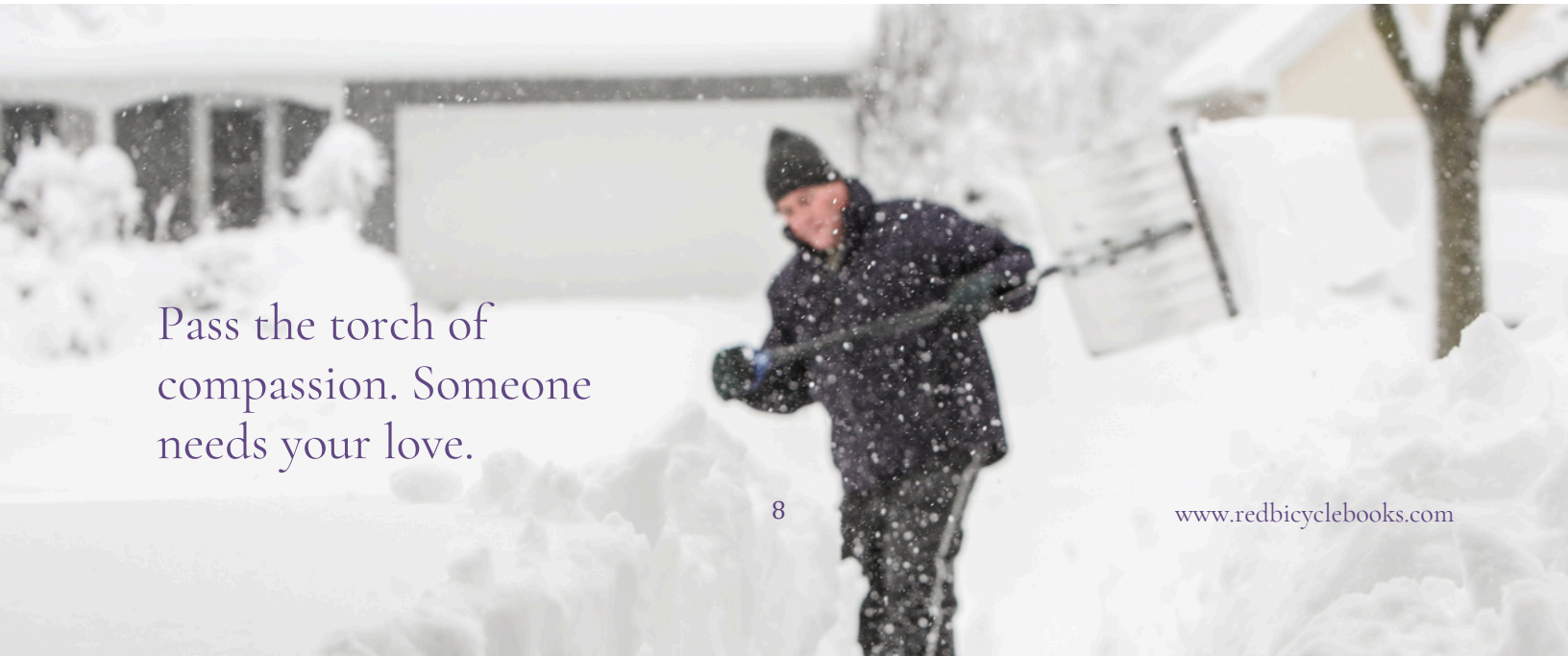
Some people who may not have any family left. Make them feel part of this magical season by remembering them. There is nothing more special than writing a note card to someone to cheer them up and show your care.

Make it intentional

Pick up the phone and reach out to a family member or friend. Even a five-minute conversation where you can hear someone's voice can really make a difference in our text message-driven society. Enjoy a laugh or two then journal about your experience.

Compliment

You would be surprised how many people smile when you give them a compliment. Notice how their body language changes? Pay a compliment to a stranger. It may be the best mood boost for both of you.



Pass the torch of compassion. Someone needs your love.

Planning for a busy season

Before you know it, the holidays reach us often before we are ready. We become surrounded by advertisements, plans, and to-do lists.

Balancing daily life routines, responsibilities, and juggling the holiday season challenges obligations on top of the tasks we need to accomplish can escalate stress levels.

Reasons for holiday stress

- Finances
- Expectations/perfection (yourself, others, social media, entertainment industry)
- Loss of loved ones (recent and/or past)
- Increase in to-do items
- Family dynamics
- Traveling
- Disruption of regular routine
- Social anxiety
- Loneliness
- Gift giving/wrapping
- Meal preparation
- Hosting guests overnight
- Household chores
- Comparison to others
- Pressure to keep tradition

After reading this list, perhaps you can relate to one or more that personally impact your life. While the holiday season is inevitable, we can choose what is and what is not in our control to help us to navigate this busy time and take the pressure off of ourselves to enjoy the holidays.

The best ways to minimize stress is by planning ahead and evaluating what is in our control.

Handling seasonal stressors

What's on my mind?	What's in my control?
Finances	Create a budget using an app such as *Rocket Money*, *Monarch Money*, a spreadsheet, or another tool. Allocate a portion for gifts, food, and travel expenses to track. Take advantage of special deals and promotions. Apps like *Slickdeals* and *Honey* alert consumers of sales and price drops.
Setting Expectations	Decide what is necessary versus nice to have. For example, it may be nice to have those extra lights that twinkle in the outside archway, but do you really *need* them?
Travel	Book travel as soon as possible to avoid peak holiday prices. Apps such as *Skyscanner* and *Hopper* will notify you of price decreases.
To-do items	Create a list and prioritize tasks. Place items in a bulleted list versus a numerical list as sometimes the number of items can cause us to stress more. Define needs versus wants. Reward yourself for tasks accomplished.
Holiday Meal Planning	Prepare your holiday menu in advance. Write a list of required ingredients, dietary requirements, and budget. Purchase nonperishable items early, which can help spread out costs and lessen shopping stress and crowds. Other options include catering from local restaurants, or companies that provide complete meal kits such as *Blue Apron, HelloFresh, Home Chef*, or *Factor*. Estimate the number of guests you will have in advance as many of the meals are designed around quanity.
Gift giving	Purchase gifts over the course of time before the holiday season arrives to help offset costs, for example, gift cards. Watch for special deal days. Apps such as *ShopSavvy* and *Karma* can help you prepare a wish list with notifications of price alerts. Create nonmaterial personal gifts that have special meaning to someone such as knitting a scarf, or painting a picture or spending quality time together.

Holiday season tips

Start as soon as possible

Set budgets, create to-do lists, design meal plans, and prioritize your calendar plenty of time in advance. Organize and manage goals into smaller, attainable pieces.

Delegate tasks

Ask for help. For meal prep, ask others to join. Perhaps someone can make a dessert while another can bring an appetizer.

Reward yourself

When you finish a task, reward yourself. This healthy reminder is of a job well done and can keep you motivated to work on your list.

Less is more

While another three sets of twinkling lights may sound nice, will you be able to live without it? Take additional pressures off yourself by determining essentials versus what is nice to have to simplify your load.

Provide enough screen time away from the rush of the season that can overstimulate us including ad bombardment.

Say “no, thank you”

We want to be polite and handle everything, but realistically, it isn’t possible. Make up time with that person to show that you care. This way you still make them feel important and valued.



What's in my control?

Write what's in your control inside the snow globe. Write what's out of your control on the outside of the snow globe. Hang this reminder in a place you will see often.



Managing expectations

In the space below, set realistic expectations for yourself. Focus on what goals you want to accomplish this holiday season while embracing a healthy balance. Remember to focus on what is in your control.

What's important to me this holiday season?

Holiday goals

How I will achieve my goals

I am remembering to make time for myself by...

Creating a mental wish list

At this time of the year many of us focus on material possessions, but think about what your wish list may look like from a nonmaterial perspective. What are you craving more of? Use the wish list below to write what you desire to invite this into this holiday season. Hang this gentle reminder on the refrigerator to remember what makes you feel whole and happy.

I wish upon a star...



Leave comparison outside

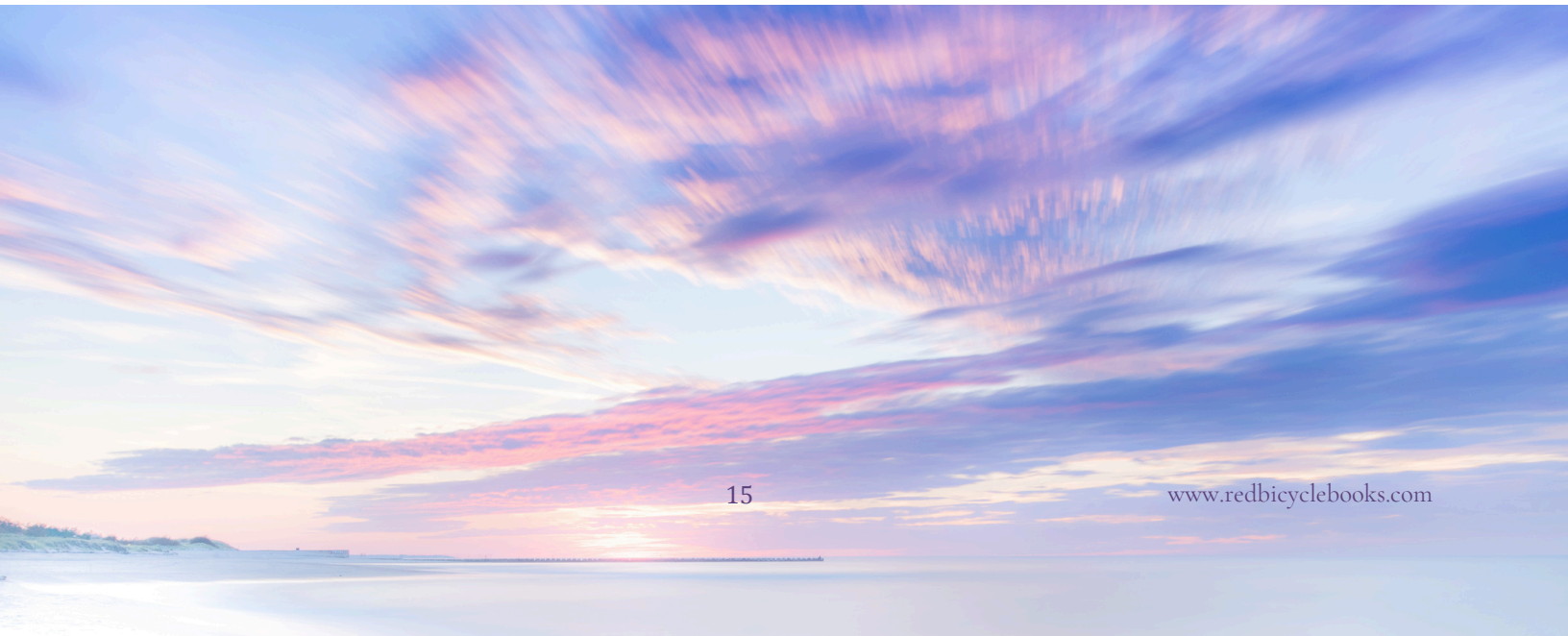
Social media provides a window into the world around us. From holiday decorations to family gatherings, you may find yourself thinking, "Maybe we should have done that. They look like they are having a good time. They don't have any problems. They have the perfect family."

The truth is, not all is revealed to the world of what families and individuals face. Even your own family or friends have problems of their own they may not readily open up to for various reasons including the following:

- Shame
- Guilt
- Scared of being judged
- Losing a relationship

Set your own expectations for how you want your holidays to go. A beautiful sky doesn't compete with the colors around it; they all become part of one beautiful existence.

Set your own expectations without comparison.



Handling difficult family interactions

This time of year can bring about joy, but can also test relationships. Social tension can increase not only due to the amount of time interacted but also due to past disagreements or conflict. Below are some ways you can soften this time to spend time to enjoy the holidays.

Set healthy boundaries

Ease into a comfortable conversation starter of neutral territory, then build rapport from there. If the conversation takes a turn into a direction that is going down a path that becomes uncomfortable for you, redirect the conversation to set a boundary that eases tension. If things become too tense, politely excuse yourself to recenter to calm.

Remember they make mistakes too

We are all imperfect beings. What may be easy for you, may not be for someone else and vice versa. Accepting someone for who they are is one of the most challenging parts of family connectivity. Be gentle with your mistakes and of others. The past is over, but the future is yours. Seek optimism.

Relax your stance

We often view the world through our lens of interpretation rather than what things may actually be. We often set the bar of expectations for others with our own yardstick because it is difficult for us to imagine what it is like to live in someone else's shoes. Ease expectations from others by softening your stance. Instead of letting a conversation agitate you, don't give it additional attention. This creates stagnation. Letting our thoughts flow like a peaceful river directs calm.



Handling difficult family interactions

Don't delay difficult conversations

One of the hardest things is to be honest with someone to their face. We tend to shy away from difficult conversations because we don't want to create conflict or hurt someone's feelings. These conversations can also feel awkward. However, someone may not know they hurt you.

Difficult conversations are best for face-to-face and/or vocal conversations rather than text. Texting conversations can lead to misinterpretation (from jokes to something more serious) which may lead to miscommunication. Contact the person deciding on a time and space where both of you can get a few items off your chest in a neutral place. A museum, park, or festival can provide interaction while enjoying the day together.

Limit visitation time

If a visit becomes overwhelming, limit your interaction time. Remind yourself of the original intent of why you are visiting in the first place.

Meet halfway

Relationships are about communication and compromise. Create a middle ground where you can compromise to meet someone else halfway. Address and establish boundaries that make you both feel comfortable and open to communicate.

Seek forgiveness

At some point in our lives, everyone will hurt us. We have to make the decision who are we willing to fight for. Ask for forgiveness and ask them to forgive you.

If you've given a relationship a considerable amount of effort and are unable to resolve your differences, then saying goodbye may be the only choice to find peace. Sometimes forgiveness includes making peace with the apology you are never going to receive. Write a letter to yourself of the apology you wished to have received from the person who hurt you. This can bring the comfort of closure to this relationship if it is beyond repair.

Let's put it into action

With everything you learned about yourself, it's time to put this into action. Print many pages of the journal on the next page.

As the days go by, take time to reflect what you are learning about yourself in the process. What made you stronger? How do you create your center of peace by focusing on self-care? What brings you joy regardless of the type of day you are having? Remember to focus on the moment, cherishing the calm you create in the inhales and exhales of your beautiful breaths.

No matter which holiday(s) you celebrate, I wish you peace and love. May you enjoy this and create some great memories. This is the legacy you will leave behind.

My Holiday Journal

S M T W T F S

Date _____

I maintained self-care today by:

I am keeping my peace today during this holiday season by:

Today I achieved:

A quote that brought me happiness today:

An act of kindness I did today:

A holiday memory that brings me cheer no matter what:

Today, I celebrated this special day by:

What peace looks like for me today:

Goals for tomorrow:

Keep shining on,
you amazing star!

What did you learn about yourself this holiday season?

What was the biggest takeaway you learned about yourself?

How did you create peace in your world?

How does this help you prepare for the next holiday season?



“

The holiday season is about love! Share it. Spread it. Live it.

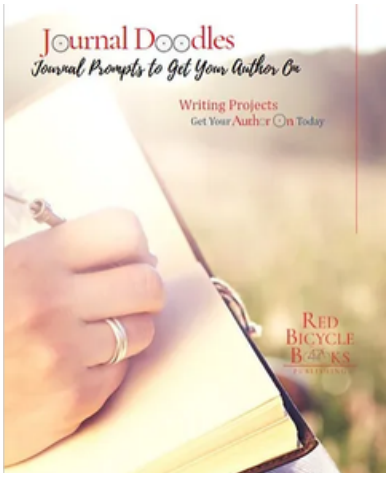
-Amy Leigh Mercree

We hope you enjoyed this journaling project that has provided you with a tool you can use to discover yourself, your dreams and goals, process your feelings, that will hopefully become part of your daily life, the legacy you leave behind with your words each and every day. Discover more writing projects to get your author on.

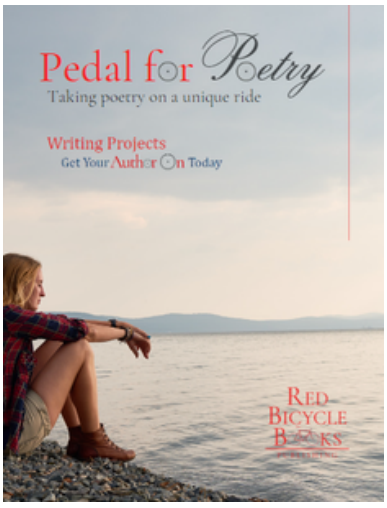
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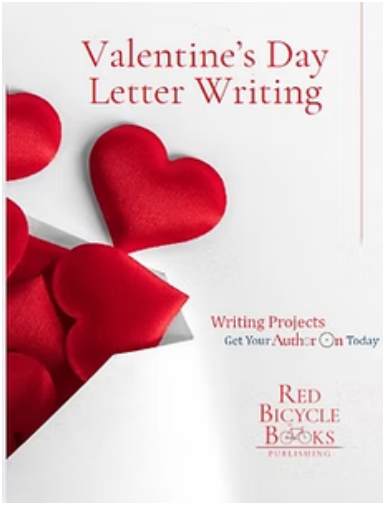












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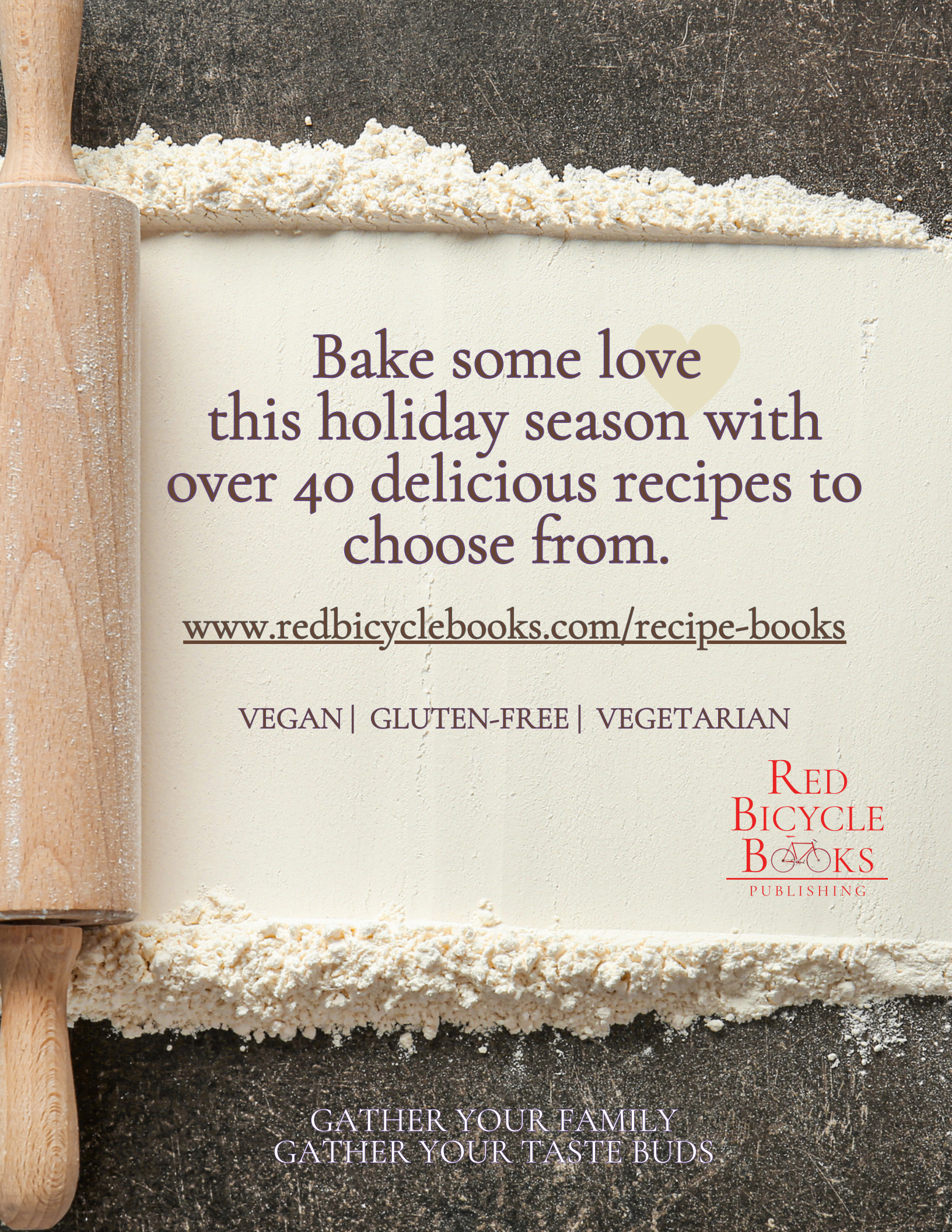
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