

Holiday Stress Tips



What is holiday stress? *The whirlwind of gift-giving, family and holiday gatherings, with all the extra activities and expectations can take a toll on the most cheerful among us. Each year brings changes in our lives and these can impact our feelings and energy level. Here are a few hints to help you through the holiday time.*

1. **Keep expectations realistic:** Don't worry about having the perfect party, the perfect tree, or the perfect gifts. It is okay to have a less than magical family gathering. Accept imperfections in yourself and in others.
2. **Plan ahead:** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. For many of us, making lists can be useful. Expect travel delays, especially if you're flying.
3. **Create a Budget:** Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts. Consider an alternative to gifts for every person. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.
4. **Take care of your body:** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Alcohol is a known depressant, so cutting back can help your mood.
5. **Do something nice for yourself:** Take a break. Do something fun and something that you enjoy. Take time for yourself--take a hot bath, listen to your favorite music or read a good book. There should be something in the holiday for you, not just for everyone else.
6. **Change it up:** Sometimes "traditions" become a burden--families change, children grow up. Consider doing something different this year.
7. **Breathe deeply:** When the day is full, and evening looks even more hectic, take a minute to breathe slowly from your abdomen. These breaths will deliver oxygen to your body and relieve tension. Do this exercise for one minute a couple times a day, with closed eyes. Think of something pleasant. You will be surprised how refreshed you feel.
8. **Recognize that there can be "too much" or "too little" togetherness.** Loneliness is also a source of difficulty during the holidays. Reaching out to others can be a terrific antidote to the holiday blues. A phone call to someone or volunteering with an organization can cheer both you and the recipient of your kindness.
9. **Count your blessings:** When you look at your blessings, it will raise hope that more good things will come.
10. **Laugh:** Take a humor break each day. Laughter is a known Stress Reliever.