

Stress-Relieving Tips for the Holidays



Acknowledge your feelings!

It's OK now and then to express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.



Seek support!

If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or community, religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your social circle.



Plan ahead!

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make one big food-shopping trip. Allow extra time for travel so that delays won't worsen your stress.



Learn to say no!

Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful and overwhelmed.



Rethink resolutions!

Resolutions can set you up for failure if they're unrealistic. Don't resolve to change your whole life to make up for past excess. Instead, try to return to basic, healthy lifestyle routines. Set smaller, more specific goals with a reasonable time frame. Choose only those resolutions that help you feel valuable & provide more than only fleeting moments of happiness.



Don't abandon healthy habits!

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. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.



Seek professional help if you need it!

Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for several weeks, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. You may have depression.

Forget about perfection!

Something always comes up. You may get stuck late at the office and miss your daughter's school play, your sister may dredge up an old argument, you may forget to put nuts in the cake, and your mother may criticize how you and your partner are raising the kids. Expect & accept imperfections.

Be realistic!

As families change and grow, traditions often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to. But understand in some cases that may no longer be possible.

Set differences aside!

Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. With stress and activity levels high, the holidays might not be conducive to making quality time for relationships. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress, too.



Stick to a budget!

Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

Take a breather!

Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that clears your mind, slows your breathing & restores your calm.

