

## Tips to De-Stress Your Holiday Season

Perhaps it's the first time you hear "Jingle Bells" on the radio or see Christmas lights go up on a neighbor's house. Whatever the moment may be, you have the realization that the holiday season is in full swing. You may experience childlike feelings of excitement that accompany the season, but at the same time, a very adult feeling may sneak up on you---stress.

Counting down the days left to shop, making travel plans, and organizing family get-togethers can leave you feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, rather than full of holiday cheer. The holiday season brings with it a great amount of responsibilities, and even the fun activities can leave you feeling tired and stressed. According to the American Psychological Association, the main sources of holiday stress are related to relationships, finances, and physical demands. By following a few practical tips, you can reduce and manage the stress that accompanies the holiday season.

**Relationships** can create stress at any time, but tensions and conflicts are often intensified during the holiday season when increased demands are placed on family members. On the other hand, facing the holidays without a loved one can create feelings of sadness and loneliness.

- Take time for yourself. Spend 15 minutes alone to refresh and clear your mind.
- Have realistic expectations. Families change and grow, so traditions and rituals may change as well. Hold on to the most special traditions, and be open to creating new ones.
- Reach out to others. Community agencies and social events offer support and companionship for those who may feel lonely and isolated during the holiday season. Volunteering and helping others can lift your spirits and put your family life into perspective.
- Make time for fun.

**Financial** issues often arise during the holiday season leading to undesirable stress. Gifts, travel, food, and entertainment expenses add up quickly and can lead to unexpected debt.

- Stick to a budget. Consider how much you want to spend in total for the season, and set a spending limit. Keep track of how much you spend on the holidays, including decorations, travel, holiday entertainment and meals, and cards and postage.
- Plan ahead. Before shopping, look through newspaper ads and store circulars to find which stores are running specials and where the prices are lowest. Comparison shop on the internet to find out which stores carry the items you want at the best price.
- Make homemade gifts or give "gift certificates" for your time and talents.

**Physical demands** of the holiday season can initiate or increase stress. Shopping for gifts, attending social gatherings, and preparing holiday meals can be exhausting.

- Know your limits. Give yourself permission to say no to extra holiday activities.
- Don't abandon healthy habits. Continue to get plenty of sleep and stay physically active. Avoid overindulging at holiday meals by preparing a healthy snack ahead of time.

The holiday season can be stressful and overwhelming, but taking small steps to combat the stress can help you to relax and enjoy the season.

Resources:

The American Psychological Association. [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)