

Extension Education  
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## Holiday Stress? Not This Season By Tasha Killian

The holidays can be a stressful time. There's pictures to take, food to bake, presents to buy, cards to send out, and SO much more. Sometimes the stress can make you wonder whether it is the most wonderful time of the year or the most stressful. And even though, none of us want to admit it, sometimes our families can be the biggest cause of stress during the holidays. If you are feeling a little or a lot of stress this holiday season, don't worry! First, you are not alone and second, you can combat this stress with the help of these few tips.

Make a list and check it twice. Making lists may overwhelm some people, but organization is key to beating the holiday stress. Having a set plan of action for how to accomplish all the tasks you need to do is a great way to reduce stress. Whether it's a calendar with important dates, a list to check off the tasks, or an app that reminds you of key points, finding a method to keep the madness in check will help you combat stress this holiday season.

Keep up with your good habits. Although it might be tempting to hide away or eat bad foods in the winter time, being able to maintain your healthy habits during the wintertime will help you stay in a better mood and remain positive, even when the stress hits.

Be honest with yourself. It can be hard to admit when you've taken on too much. It can be even harder to admit when stress has gotten the best of you. Being able to be honest with yourself and remember to take a breather or take a step back or even say no to one more thing can actually be one of the most preventative methods to keep the stress away.

Stick to a budget. The holidays are hard without having to worry about money and budgeting. Being able to keep a budget and manage how much you spend on decorations, presents, and travel will help you be able to keep your cool.

Keep your head clear and your actions clearer. There are things that cloud judgements and can instantly be a time bomb for disaster. One of those things is alcohol and another one of those is communication. Although the holidays can seem like a time for indulgence, it is important to remember that alcohol can cloud judgements and is a huge factor in many family disputes. Another factor is communication. Being able to communicate what you mean and say it clearly so that your family can understand you will definitely reduce stress during the holiday season.

If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it. We don't usually try to say something offensive or mean to our family members, but during the holidays, we are often exposed to family members who share different opinions on politics, religion, or even our life choices. In these occasions, it is often best to remain silent and avoid the confrontation. Keep in mind that everyone feels the stress of the holidays, and adding to that stress by starting arguments, or participating in arguments started by others can actually be avoided by remembering to remain silent if it won't add positivity.

Give the benefit of the doubt to others. To the mailman who comes a little bit late, to the cashier who is trying to keep up with the rush, to the driver trying to make it to see their family,

and to everyone who might be stressed out themselves, it is important to give the benefit of the doubt to those around you and those you come in contact with.

Remember the reason you come together with family. It is all about love. Although holidays can be stressful, and family relationships can add to that stress, remembering the reason for why you gather together, remembering the importance of family bonds and enjoying the holiday season with those you love can keep your stress levels down.

The holiday season can be one of the most stressful. For those who suffer from anxiety and depression, many different things can trigger deep-set emotions. The key to remaining calm and combating this stress is to remember to take it all in stride and enjoy the memories made. Whether those memories are with friends, with family, or neighbors, the holiday season can be enjoyed if you follow these tips to avoid stress and keep your cool when things get rough.