

# Self-Care During the Holidays

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Just as there are so many wonderful things during the holiday season, there are also many aspects that can be overwhelming, stressful, and upsetting. Financial issues, familial and personal conflict, overwhelming amounts of new holiday-related tasks, or grief can all impact the holidays. In fact, holidays are one of the most stressful times of the year (Phillips et al., 2004). Luckily, there are many ways we can help cope with stressors and enjoy the holiday season more. Here are a few self-care tips for this holiday season:

### General Self-Care Tips:

- **Stay Active.** Staying active, especially during the winter holidays, can help improve your mood. Exercise is proven to help reduce stress. It can also help to give you time to focus on yourself, which can be difficult with busy holiday schedules (Schaeffer, 2015).
- **Get Good Sleep.** Getting good rest is vital to staying happy and healthy. Being well rested can help with energy, mood, and your immune system (Moore, 2022).
- **Allow Yourself to Live in the Moment.** With holidays it can be easy to get caught up in making sure everything is perfect instead of finding enjoyment. Make sure to take time to relax and be present (Schaeffer, 2015; Shattell & Johnson, 2017).

- **Take Time for Yourself.** It can be hard to step away from friends and family who you may not see as often and take time to yourself during the holidays. Making sure you can step away and take care of your needs will help you make sure that your body and mind are taken care of as well (Moore, 2022).

### Tips for Handling Loss & Major Changes:

- **Simplify Your Holiday.** Do the traditions that are truly important to you and keep things simple when experiencing grief. When you are trying to handle the holiday and loss, it can help to focus on things that matter the most to you.
- **Allow Yourself to Mourn.** Instead of trying to keep a brave face, take time to acknowledge and feel your grief. For some, it could be helpful to include mourning in their celebration. Do what feels right for you.
- **Try Not to Judge Your Grief.** Even though holidays are supposed to be a happy time, they are often hardest when you're grieving. Don't get mad at yourself or judge yourself for not being able to enjoy holidays like you used to. Know that grief is not "one-size-fits-all" and is different for everyone (Wolfelt, 2005).
- It's important, especially with children, to be open about holiday changes and struggles like loss or divorce. It is important to make sure everyone knows what's going on and that it is okay to express feelings (Hyatt, 1996).

### Tips for Minimizing Financial Stress:

- **Make a Budget.** There are lots of ways to make budgets, including holiday-specific ones, so choose one that works for you. It can be hard to stick to these budgets but doing so can help lessen stress related to money (Shain, 2022).
- **Don't Equate Love with Expense.** A gift doesn't have to be expensive to be meaningful. In fact, price often doesn't factor into gift appreciation (Flynn & Adams, 2009). It can help your budget to get crafty with your holiday gifts. Try making some yourself, checking for things in local secondhand stores, and consider alternative gifts like practical gifts or shared experiences (Ure, 2021).
- **Don't Equate Quantity with Quality.** For parents especially, there can be pressure to make sure there is a big pile of presents under the tree. There are many strategies you can use when selecting gifts for the holiday season. For example, the [four-gift method](#) can help ensure a nice assortment while remaining cost effective (McAtasney & Dow, 2021).

These are just a few examples and tips for frequent stressors that surround the holiday season. The most important thing about the holiday season is to make sure you take care of yourself. By practicing self-care, gratitude, and being present in the moment, you may find more enjoyment in the season, even if that means changing your holiday to suit your financial or emotional needs.

#### Additional Resources for Support:

- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.
- **Crisis Text Line:** <https://www.crisistextline.org/>.
- **USU Extension Mental Health Resources:** <https://extension.usu.edu/mentalhealth/>.
- **USU Extension Finance Resources - Tips for Creating a Holiday Budget:** [usu.edu/finance/faq/money-tips-for-the-holiday-season](https://usu.edu/finance/faq/money-tips-for-the-holiday-season).
- **USU Extension Relationships Resources - Tips for Loneliness During the Holidays:** <https://extension.usu.edu/relationships/faq/loneliness-during-the-holiday-season>.

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