

## Surviving Holiday Stress

**Be realistic.** We often start off the holiday season with lots of great ideas for family fun, decorating, parties, gifts and crafts. Now is the time to take a step back and look realistically at the time frame you have remaining to get all these things done on top of your regular activities. **Remember that these fun ideas can become "one more thing" on your "To-Do" list.** Pick a few things you would like to be involved in and enjoy them. Save the other ideas for another year or as a way to ward off winter blues in the New Year.

**Maintain your regular exercise routine.** Don't slip up simply because you have some extra errands to do. Don't schedule your workouts around your other activities; schedule **your other activities around your workout routines.** Try to go to the gym, swim or exercise at home at the same time each day. Give yourself and loved ones the best gift of all this holiday and take care of your health first.

**Feel pulled in a million directions?** If your children need you at school concerts, work has extra holiday hours for you or your friends need you to help plan a big holiday party, keep in mind that you won't be of use to anyone if you over-exhaust yourself. **Take a break each day for yourself.** Plan it in your calendar as you would for meetings with family and friends. Schedule "you" time for at least 15-30 minutes each day doing something that you enjoy. Whether it's reading a good book, going for a manicure or journal writing, take the time to relax and do things you want to do.

**Learn to say no.** Don't take something on assuming you will find the time to get it done. Practice with your family. **Separate what really needs to get done from what would be nice if it got done.** Focus on getting things that have to get done and delegate or hold off on the rest. The holidays should be an enjoyable time for everyone. Don't let yourself become a slave to the season.

**Eat properly.** Don't use the holidays and stress as a reason to overeat. Although the holidays always seem to bring with them sweet treats and extra appetizers, don't let them tempt you. Remember, **just because someone offers you something, you do not have to accept.** It is not considered rude to politely pass on a food. If you start something and know you should stop, pack it up and take it home for a snack or meal later. There is no rule saying you must eat everything on your plate or everything that is handed to you. Pick and choose the healthiest foods and indulge on those. Eat smaller portions of your selected treats.

Although some people think alcohol decreases your stress, it is only a temporary solution. Try to stay away from consuming too many cocktails as this will interfere with your diet and overall well-being. If you are careful with what you drink, you will also eliminate consuming too much at holiday parties which in turn could save you some added stress when you get on the scale.

**Cut down your gift giving list.** If you have too many people to buy gifts for this year, make a smaller list. Many people will understand and be **relieved of the stress and pressure of time and money**, just as you will be. This works for especially well for larger families. Gather for a cookie or gift exchange where each person is only required to bring one item or send a thoughtful Christmas card instead.

**Stick to a budget.** Financial woes top of the list of relationship issues. Don't put an extra strain on yourself and your relationship by running up big bills this season. You will decrease your quality of living by increasing stress: wondering how you are going to pay your bills, working extra hours to keep creditors at bay, and doing without things you actually need because you wanted to have the "best Christmas ever." **Decide ahead of time how much you are going to spend on each person on your list.** Remember that it really is the thought that counts, and not the size or number of presents.

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