

Your Health: Tips to Manage Holiday Stress



How can you lower your stress?

The holidays can be a joyful time, offering chances to reconnect with friends and family. But they can also be stressful and hectic. You may feel pressure to buy gifts, and you may be worried about money.

Think about what triggers stress for you during the holidays. Then focus on a few things you can do that will help you reduce stress.

Start preparing early

- **Set a budget, and don't spend more than you planned.** It's okay to tell your child that a certain toy costs too much. Don't buy gifts that you'll spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- **Give something personal and meaningful.** It doesn't have to cost a lot. Instead of buying an expensive gift, call or write notes and share your feelings with people.

- **Get organized.** Make lists to keep track of tasks, and keep a calendar of events to attend.
- **Share your "to do" list with others.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing holiday meals.

Take care not to overdo it

- **Say "no" to events that aren't important to you.** This will give you more time to say "yes" to events you care about.
- **Take breaks from group activities.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Spend a little time by yourself if you can. Meditate, or do some relaxation breathing. Go for a short walk.
- **Keep a regular sleep, meal, and exercise schedule.** Limit your alcohol. Taking care of yourself will help you deal with stressful situations during the holidays.
- **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you. And remember that just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away. If you have a hard time being around your relatives, it's okay to set limits on your time at events and visits.
- **Get support if you need it.** Holidays can sometimes trigger depression. You may feel embarrassed to ask for help, or you may think that you'll get over "the blues" on your own. But most people need treatment to get better. Talk with your doctor about counseling and medicine for depression.

