

Nine tips to reduce holiday stress

The holidays can be a joyful time, offering a chance to reconnect with friends and family. They can also be stressful and hectic. You may feel pressure to buy and give gifts, have concerns about money, or feel like there isn't enough time to get everything done.

Think about the kinds of events that trigger stress for you during the holidays. Then, you can focus on one or two things you can do that will help the most to reduce stress.

Here are some ideas:

Preparing for the holidays

1. **Know your spending limit.** Lack of money is one of the biggest causes of stress during the holiday season. This year, set a budget, and don't spend more than you've 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.
2. **Give something personal.** You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal. It doesn't have to cost a lot. Or, use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
3. **Get organized.** Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks to do and events to attend.
4. **Share the tasks.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Share your "to do" list with others. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing the holiday meal.
5. **Learn to say no.** It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. This will give you more time to say "yes" to events that you do want to attend.

6. **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.

During the holidays

You may not be able to avoid stressful situations during the holidays, but you can plan to respond to them in a healthy way.

7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **Get support if you need it.** Holidays can sometimes trigger depression. They can be especially hard if you are already dealing with the death of a loved one or the breakup of a relationship. 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.

Help is available. For additional information, visit MagellanHealth.com/MYMH

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