



Coping with Holiday Stress

Acknowledge Your Feelings

The holidays can bring up difficult family memories, thoughts of a lost family member, or unresolved conflict, acknowledge this when it occurs. Reflecting back on disappointments over the past year can also exacerbate negative feelings.

Accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time.

For some people, the holidays can bring up feelings of sadness, loneliness, or angry. If this is you, try to spend time with people who care about you, take a vacation, or volunteer to help others.

Stick to a Budget

Before you go gift/food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

Be Realistic

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones.

Reach Out/ Share the Work

Allow others to help by dividing up chores/tasks. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship.

Plan Ahead

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. If shopping online, mail gifts to location where you will spend the holidays. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. Make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

Don't Abandon Healthy Habits

Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Avoid starving yourself in anticipation of eating at holiday parties. This will also lead to eating and drinking too much. Studies show that "taking time off" from a healthy lifestyle decreases the likelihood of starting the healthy habits again. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

Take a Breather

Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Learn to Say NO

Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. Set priorities and let go of impossible goals. Don't spend all your time over-planning activities for your family.