

## Holiday Stress Relief Tips



As the winter holidays near, our stress levels go up. Does just thinking about Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's make you tense? Do you feel like Scrooge? You're not alone, in fact, you're the majority!

It becomes very difficult to savor time with your family and friends when you've got too many responsibilities and not enough time. Many of the duties such as cleaning, decorating, cooking and shopping for gifts are mostly assigned to women. With this in mind, it's no doubt that the holidays can be the most stressful time of the year.

Don't endure another stress-filled holiday season! This article will outline some great tips for you to ease up on yourself and take pleasure in the small things that often go unnoticed when you've got too much on your to-do list.

### **Make To-Do Lists**

By making lists, you're acknowledging what you need to get accomplished. Underline everything on the list that is an absolute MUST and do those things first. Usually, these are the most difficult chores and are best accomplished early on. Just by having a to-do list, you reduce the stress of trying to remember everything and ensure you won't forget the most important things that need attention.

### **Be Organized**

Whether it's your kitchen pots and pans or Christmas wrapping paper, arranging things in an organized manner will make jobs easier to tackle. Invest in some plastic storage containers for Christmas decorations and use a large empty popcorn tin to store your bows so they don't get smashed.

Have you ever been buried in gifts and wrapping paper only to realize you can't find the tape that you just had in your hand 30 seconds ago? Have 2-3 rolls of tape on hand and you won't be looking for long. The same goes for scissors and pens to write on your gift tags. Use empty shopping bags for a makeshift trash can.

### **Get Help**

For immediate holiday stress relief, distribute some tasks on your to-do lists to family members. You probably won't receive any help if you don't ask, so don't be shy. Put the family on notice that if your holiday is going to be perfect, it's going to have to be a group effort. You may notice that some things your family always wanted seem less important to them now if they're the ones responsible for doing it.

If you're hosting the family Christmas dinner, ask for assistance. Most guests are willing to bring an appetizer or side dish to help complete the meal. Let them know ahead of time which variety of foods you need them to bring along. Better yet, have some of them arrive early to set the table and handle any last minute meal preparations.

### **Set a Budget**

And stick to it. From Christmas gifts, decorations to food, avoid overspending. You're not going to appreciate credit card debts in January and February, so set limits for gifts. Have family members make a wish list with only items in the price range that was agreed upon.

Don't be tempted to bend the rules and spend more. This will lower your resolve and soon you'll be spending more than you anticipated. Most larger families find it much easier to draw names for Christmas. Thanksgiving is the ideal time to do this and it gets everyone into the holiday spirit.

### **Pamper Yourself**

The days leading up to Christmas are the most stressful, so make time for yourself. Find some solitude in a warm bubble bath and relax. Trigger your senses with aromatic potpourri and scented candles. Kick back and listen to soothing Christmas music and take a cat nap if necessary.

Plan a day or just several hours only for yourself. Get your hair cut, have a massage, paint your nails and catch up on current events. This will do wonders for your stress level and self esteem.

### **Use Disposable Cameras**

Don't be solely responsible for holiday memories. Buy a few disposable cameras (with flash) and scatter them throughout the house. Tell your guests to take some candid photos whenever they see fit. Not only will they have fun doing it, you will finally get to be in some of the pictures. Have a photo album set aside for every year and bring them out before your party begins.

### **Take Control**

Most important, be in control. This doesn't mean being a control freak, it means taking charge of your own life. If you're going to run around trying to please everyone, you will feel resentful. Choose which things you can and cannot do -- and be firm. If you're the type of person who finds it hard to say "no", there may be family members who are aware of that and will take advantage.

Don't let this happen anymore and absolutely do not do something you don't want to do just because you think it's expected of you. Be straight forward and tell them this is something that you cannot do this year, or if it's less significant, simply don't do it. You'll soon find that being in control of your own plans brings wonderful holiday stress relief and you will look forward to Christmas instead of feeling that knot tighten in your stomach.

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