



MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

December 1, 2021



This week...

De-Stress During the Holidays

My 10 year old son asked me the other day, “Mom, why do you not like Christmas?”

This stopped me in my tracks. I have always loved the holidays. However, he must have sensed something in my increased grumblings the past few years at the mention of the season, or perhaps the tension that I exude towards the end of November. This had me thinking: ***“To what degree is the stress of this time of year taking away from my enjoyment?”***

The holidays can be a joyful time, especially this year with a better chance to reconnect with friends and family. However, it can also be filled with many different sources of stress:

- Pressure to buy and give gifts – *and something about a supply shortage?*
- Not enough time to get everything done, like:
 - Shopping
 - Decorating

- Baking (for those of you talented to do so – not on my stress list!)
- Financial strain
- Travelling – short *or* long distances – is now more stressful
- Interacting in person with family members you would prefer to see on Zoom

What are the things that trigger stress for you during the holidays? Once you are aware of these, then you can focus on one or two things you can do to reduce your stress.

Here is a high-level checklist of considerations to reduce your stress. For more details – [click here](#).

Preparing for the holidays:

- **Know your spending limit.** This year, set a budget, and don't spend more than you've planned.
- **Give something personal.** You can show love and caring with a gift that is meaningful and personal. Or use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you.
- **Get organized.** Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks and events.
- **Share responsibility.** You don't have to do it all! Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, preparing the holiday meal, and cleaning up.
- **Learn to say no.** It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. 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.
- **Be open to new ways.** Shop online to save time and energy. 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.
- **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away, and 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.

- **Take breaks from group activities.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Go for a short walk and/or do some breathing exercises to help you relax.
- **Keep up a healthy routine.** Taking care of yourself will help you deal with stressful situations during the holidays (and what awaits you in January!).

Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
- Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga.
- Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.
- Be aware how information culture can produce undue stress; as you see fit, adjust the time you spend reading news and social media.

Get support if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad, anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable, and unable to face routine chores. 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. ***But most people need treatment to get better. Talk with your doctor about counselling and medicine for depression.***

This section is just for the Type A folks – you know who you are....

Accept Imperfection

Allow this to be 'good enough', especially given the tough and exhausting fall you have had. Do not set the bar impossibly high for yourself, and then feel upset when celebrations don't live up to expectations. As you well know, things may not go exactly as planned and it is OK not to be perfect!

Don't Lose Sight of What Really Counts

With long lines and nasty traffic, the holidays can get hectic. When you start to feel overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle, ask yourself:

- **Where does this fit in the grand scheme of things?** If you're frustrated by the long grocery line you're standing in, remember that it is just a long grocery line — nothing more. Don't let it spoil your afternoon.

- **Can I use this moment of frustration as an opportunity to reflect?** While the cashier rings up the customers ahead of you, take inventory of the good things that have happened today or the things you are grateful for.
- **Even if this moment seems stressful, can I find a way to make it pleasant?** Connect with someone else in line with a compliment, a kind gesture, or notice what's around you with fresh eyes and an open mind.

Rethink Your Resolutions

Typical New Year's resolutions set you up for failure. Try this if you want to better yourself in the New Year:

- **Start small.** Break your goal into small steps over the course of the year. If weight loss is your goal, it doesn't have to be drastic – just start with targeting a couple of behaviours.
- **Be kind to yourself.** If you didn't achieve last year's resolution or strayed from the path, let it go. Do not be a self-critic. Let go of the negativity and pick your goals back up without the guilt or shame.

Want to learn more?

[Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress and Depression](#)

[Managing the Seemingly Inevitable Holiday Season Stress](#)

Sources

Health Link BC | [Health Topics](#)

John Hopkins Medicine | [4 Mindful Tips to De-Stress This Holiday Season](#)