

## 6 Tips To Reduce Holiday Stress

While the holiday season can be the happiest time of the year, it can also be one of the most stressful. Between hunting down your gift checklist, cooking, cleaning, decorating, hosting guests, reuniting with family and friends—it's understandable why some of us go from holiday cheery to downright dreary.

In fact, it's not entirely uncommon to experience depression during the holidays. According to the American Psychological Association, 44 percent of women deal with an increase in stress this time of year; men are not far behind, surveyed at 33 percent.

Don't settle on being a Scrooge by forgoing the holiday season – you'll only feel more like one. Instead, take a look at some of these tips to keep holiday stress down and your spirit up.

1. Create a budget. Not only are the lines at the mall enough to induce stress, but gift spending can get very expensive, leading to added anxiety over money, or worse, debt. Set limits on how much you'd like to spend on each person, and stick to your budget. It'll give you financial and personal peace of mind without the pressure to go overboard. In addition, remember that there are many ways to show you care or to make someone feel special. You can be thoughtful and creative in your gift giving, rather than just purchasing an expensive item. Think out of the box!
2. Don't overdo it. Do you ever go into people pleaser mode during the holidays and try to do more than you can handle? Spreading yourself too thin can lead to added stress. Take care of yourself, prioritize your responsibilities, and take care of important tasks first while seeing which ones can be done post-holiday. Remember what the holidays are really about and what is important. One hint—it is not how much money you spend!
3. Accept people for who they are and have realistic expectations. Going into that big family gathering with optimism is admirable, but don't set your expectations too high: you can't change anyone's personality, and you may end up letting yourself down if conflicts, arguments or squabbles arise over the dinner table. Try to set boundaries with your family. Also accept that not everything is going to go smoothly (with family, friends, presents, or food) during the holidays, and that is ok.
4. Be thankful and focus on what you do have. A variety of stressful feelings can arise during the holidays, and you might even feel envious or jealous over our neighbors' or family members' accomplishments or possessions, without feeling appreciation for our own. Take this as an opportunity to step back and feel gratitude for what you have – it'll remove stressful feelings and create newer, healthier ones. Think of it as a jumpstart to your New Year's resolution!
5. Remember to Take Care of Yourself! It's easy to get caught up in doing too many things and being there for everyone else. But you will end up not being good for anyone if you don't prioritize yourself and practice self-care. By taking some time to do things for yourself —i.e. take a bath, sit down and read a book you have been wanting to finish, get a massage—you will decrease stress and anxiety and be recharged so you accomplish your goals.
6. Make a conscious choice to be joyful! While the holiday stress can build up, it is important that you take responsibility for your emotions and make a conscious choice to be joyful. You have the opportunity to make this year different than previous years by changing your mindset and reactions. It is almost guaranteed that if you change how you are showing up, others will have to make at least slight adjustments in their responses and reactions. While change can certainly be uncomfortable for some, others might surprise you and actually welcome the change!