

Fun Fact of the Week

Tips to Keep Your Holiday Stress in Check*

Stress during the holiday season can take a real toll on your health, spurring depression, anxiety, financial woes and even physical aches and pains.

Bah humbug, indeed.

This season brings with it many anxiety triggers - in the form of heightened spending, bustling schedules, and family expectations. But the best way to manage your holiday-induced stress is by preparing for it in the first place. Take some time to reflect on your anxiety levels during this busy time of year and create a strategy to help you manage the season's demands without sacrificing your sense of well-being.



What Can Trigger Holiday Stress?

The first step in managing your holiday anxiety is identifying your stressor. These are some common causes of holiday stress during the Christmas season:

- Being away from a partner, friends, and family
- Associating the holiday with family turmoil
- Facing an illness during the holiday season
- Feeling lonely or isolated from others
- Feeling anxious about social or financial obligations
- Drinking alcohol more heavily at social functions
- Managing a busy social schedule on top of other responsibilities
- Keeping up with a busy workload — shopping, baking, cleaning, and entertaining, for example

Ways to Cope with Holiday Stress

Before the season begins, set your priorities

The holidays don't have to be perfect to be memorable. Start the season by defining, realistically, what will make it enjoyable for you. What traditions are important, and what others can be jettisoned? Does your Christmas dinner need to be extravagant, or can you simply host an intimate evening for a few friends and family?

Create your spending limit

Before you head out on a shopping spree, decide in advance how much money you're going to spend—even set aside budgets for individual family members.

When it comes to your holiday shopping, keep it simple: Start early when you still have plenty of selection and time, and ask your loved ones what they want in advance. This will help you better plan and budget as the season unfolds. Avoid bustling malls and shopping centers by ordering things online.

Then, set your time limit

Sometimes the family you adore doesn't get along well while in one place. And that's OK. If you have a troubled relationship with some family members, simply set a limit on how much time you're going to spend with them. Set aside your differences for this designated period.

Share the workload

Organizing your annual holiday feast? Sit down and create a menu — then have your loved ones pitch in on a few of the cooking responsibilities. You can also try picking up some prepared foods, rather than whipping up everything from scratch.

Learn to say “no”

Many find their holiday schedule packed with parties, gift exchanges, and other outings. Remember to not over-schedule yourself. It's OK to say “no” to some social engagements.

Avoid traveling to events during rush hour. And simplify some of your traditions with close friends and family — if you don't enjoy it, don't go.

Limit your alcohol consumption

While it may seem drugs and alcohol reduce stress, in the long run, they may worsen your feelings of anxiety, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Keep moving

Maybe you're accustomed to going for a morning run or attending an evening yoga class. Don't abandon these healthy habits during the holiday season. Rather, create a schedule and stick to the things that keep you feeling happy and healthy. The American Heart Association recommends making a pact with yourself to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

If you don't have a workout regimen, take some time each day to go for a walk — exercise can be a powerful means of managing stress.

Hold onto good habits

The CDC advises that healthy habits can help you manage feelings of stress. Eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of sleep, spend time alone or with your partner to unwind.