

Holiday Stress

The holiday season is a time full of joy, cheer, parties, and family gatherings.

However, for many people the holidays can also be a time of stress, loneliness and disappointment.

It can be difficult to keep personal meaning at the forefront of the holiday season amidst increased commercialization, busy schedules, and heightened expectations of how the holidays should be. The following tips may help manage holiday stress as you navigate through the holiday season:

Maintain Balance

While indulging in festive feasts and festivities is often part of the season, don't use the holidays as an excuse to let go of a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Instead, maintain consistency with meals, bedtimes, and exercise routines, which all help in managing or reducing stress for both children and adults.

Quality over Quantity

It is common to feel obligated to attend all the holiday events; however, trying to 'do it all' can leave both children and adults feeling overwhelmed, cranky, and lacking in any real quality time or memories. Instead of doing everything that comes along, have the family choose a few events that everyone agrees upon attending and really try to make those events special. This also extends to gift giving, which for many people is a significant and stressful aspect of the holidays. Examine your financial resources and draw up a gift list. Consider giving unique gifts that can't be bought such as writing your family history or offering to clean a loved one's house.

Give Back

Some years, individuals may face an unusual or difficult holiday season due to family turmoil, such as the loss or absence of a family member. In coping with such a time, it helps to set up planned events with people we love, be they friends or family. Also, consider one's idea of what the holidays really represent and act on those values and convictions. For example, you can't make a separated spouse return home, but you can share yourself with those in need, perhaps helping to distribute food or toys to families. Sometimes the simple act of volunteering can help develop meaning and happy memories during an otherwise difficult time.

Dealing with Addiction

For someone having problems with alcohol or drug addiction, the holiday festivities can be overwhelming. And families of individuals dealing with addiction often dread the holidays too, anticipating embarrassment in front of friends, family, and coworkers, intense conflicts and fights. Ultimately, the only way improve the holiday season—present and future—is to face reality and get whatever help is necessary to make changes happen.

Through an honest look at the past and present, caring and open attention to ourselves and our loved ones, and a realistic evaluation of any serious family problems, the holiday rituals can become a time to get closer to family members and truly embrace the warmth that the season represents.

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