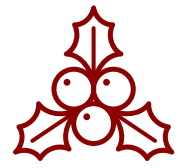


PSA In Good Health:

Tips for coping with holiday stress



Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. The holidays are already stressful and get together can add to that stress. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help with stress and depression.



The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests—stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present an abundance of demands—parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, and entertaining!



With the below tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

To do

- 1. Acknowledge your feelings**—If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sad. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- 2. Reach out**—If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- 3. Be realistic**—The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. 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.
- 4. Set aside differences**—Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes wrong. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
- 5. Stick to a budget**—Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.
- 6. Plan ahead**—Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list.
- 7. Learn to say no**—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.
- 8. Don't abandon healthy habits**—Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Try these suggestions:
 - Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks
 - Get plenty of sleep
 - Incorporate regular physical activity into each day
- 9. Take a breather**—Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm. Some options may include:
 - Taking a walk at night and stargazing
 - Listening to soothing music
 - Getting a massage
 - Reading a book
- 10. Seek professional help if you need it**—Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. If your company offers an Employee Assistance Program, consider reaching out to them.



Bottom-line



Take control of the holidays. Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can happen during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays. Happy Holidays from Your Friends at PSA!



All research and clinical material published by PSA Insurance & Financial Services is for informational purposes only. Readers are encouraged to confirm the information contained herein with other sources. Patients and consumers should review the information carefully with their professional health care provider. The information is not intended to replace medical advice offered by physicians. ©2019 PSA Insurance & Financial Services.