

A Few Tips Can Help with Holiday Stress Reduction

The upcoming holiday season can be a time of joy and peace. It can also be extremely stressful according to Dr. Jim Wirth, a human development specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

Holiday parties, social gatherings, gift-giving, family commitments, and personal responsibilities all require attention, planning, and energy. These stresses can quickly dampen your enjoyment of the holidays.

‘There are several simple things a person can do to make the holiday season more relaxing, meaningful, and stress-free for you and your family,’ said Wirth.

Here are some tips to cope with the stresses of the holiday season.

Expect Realistic Goals:

- Focus on what is really important to you and be aware of unrealistic social and personal pressures.
- Accept your own limitations and commit to only what you can comfortably handle.
- Don’t expect everything to go well (holiday perfectionist). Things can go wrong and avoid the blame game when they do.
- Don’t expect that “past conflicts” will magically disappear.
- Don’t expect young children to be “perfectly” behaved when routine is changed and they are tired.
- Don’t expect other people to feel exactly like you do.

Don’ts:

- Don’t ignore the problems that you can talk through.
- Don’t ignore feelings of sadness or the unpleasant memories of past holidays.
- Don’t cope with stress through excesses of food or alcohol. Maintain healthy routines.

Do’s:

- Make a budget of what you are going to spend: Money can be a real stressor during the holiday. Enjoy free activities
- Start shopping early in the season. Go at off-peak times.
- Establish holiday plans with your family and friends early.
- If traveling, make sure you depart with plenty of time to spare.
- If you’re on a restricted diet, consider hosting the holiday meal. That way you can stick to your diet. Also plan some easy meals and double batch your favorites.
- Develop family rituals and traditions. You can change traditions. It could be fun with a new, better tradition.
- Avoid experiencing stress resulting from your inability to effectively communicate your wants. Be assertive and make your wishes regarding holiday plans clear to those around you—and do it early.
- Some of us need time just to ourselves every day. If so, plan in advance how you’re going to get this time alone during the holidays.
- If you live alone, try to make plans early to celebrate with others. Being alone at the holidays can be extremely stressful.
- If you have no one to share the holidays with, consider volunteering at a nursing home, shelter, hospital, etc.

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