

7 Ways to Reduce Your Holiday Stress



The holidays can be a joyous and wonderful time, but there's no denying that holiday stress can sometimes creep up on even the most calm and organized among us. Holiday parties, family get-togethers, and other holiday activities can all be fun, but the added demands on our time, energy, and attention can all contribute to stress at holiday time.

Add to that the disruptions in regular schedules, travel, preparing meals, managing and take care of houseguests, and having less time for yourself and voila!

You have a perfect recipe for stress and anxiety.

Here are some common causes of holiday stress and what you can do try to be more relaxed:

Holiday Stress Management: Biggest Causes of Stress and Anxiety

Less time, more obligations. Among the biggest causes of holiday stress are the additional events and activities that are added to often already-busy schedules. Christmas parties at school, work and church; Christmas shopping, whether online or in stores; and preparing to either travel to see family or getting your house ready for guests are just some of the many extra things on the to do list that people have to contend with during the holiday season.

Fatigue. All that running around can often mean that you don't have time to [get enough rest](#). Physical exhaustion and lack of sleep can lead

to increased stress and anxiety, and one of the best ways to reduce stress and anxiety is -- you guessed it -- getting enough rest.

Financial worries. Another major contributing factor to holiday stress can be financial strain. The holidays can pack a wallop on the wallet and lead to stress and anxiety. Besides gifts, many people spend money eating out, traveling, going to shows, and participating in other [holiday activities](#). All that added expense can add up to holiday stress.

Family get-togethers. While not being able to see family during the holidays can often be a source of sadness, spending lots of time with family -- especially when packed together in one house for days while, say, visiting grandparents -- can be a big contributor to holiday stress.

Unrealistic expectations. Expecting perfection in holiday activities and events is asking for the impossible, and will only set you up for disappointment and holiday stress and lead to post-holiday letdown. To alleviate stress and anxiety, try to accept the fact that things will go wrong. Kids may have a meltdown, Christmas dinner may not come out as perfectly as you hope, people may be disappointed by their presents. Being prepared for imperfection can help reduce holiday stress.

Holiday Stress Management: How to Handle Stress and Anxiety

1. **Identify the specific causes of your holiday stress.** What are the factors that are causing the most stress and anxiety for you? Money worries? Underlying [tensions with certain family members](#)? Then do what you can to address those issues. Try to find free holiday activities or gifts you can get on sale or make yourself. Come up with ways you can either resolve or temporarily set aside conflict with a feuding family member.
2. **Let go of perfection.** Don't put too much emphasis on making everything perfect. Those magazine spreads showing gorgeous holiday decorations and feasts were prepared by teams of designers and assistants. Since you probably don't have a full-time staff at your disposal, set more realistic expectations for yourself.

3. **Make a list.** [Santa](#) isn't the only one who should be making a list. Write down your wish list of things you'd like to accomplish and be ruthless about whittling it down to things you must do. Would it be great to hand-make gifts and give out gorgeously-decorated cookies baked from scratch to friends, family, your child's teachers and the mailman? Sure. Is it realistic for you to try to do that and still be able to do things like, oh, sleep? Only you can decide for yourself.
4. **Talk to a friend.** Take a break from holiday shopping and preparation to call a friend or meet her over a cup of tea. Letting out your feelings to a supportive friend can be an invaluable, and an important way to relieve holiday stress or any kind of stress and anxiety.
5. **Let others help.** If you're feeling overwhelmed by the idea of having to cook an entire meal for Christmas or decorating for a [party](#) or tending to houseguests, have others pitch in. Why not make Christmas meals pot luck and have family members bring something to the table? If you have a relative who is crafty, ask that person to organize the decorations. Grade-school age children can also help by doing [age-appropriate chores](#) such as vacuuming or sweeping floors and tidying up rooms. You can even hire a neighborhood teen to come and lead your kids as they clean and organize the house so that you can tend to other holiday preparations.
6. **Get in some exercise.** Hectic holiday schedules can often throw a wrench into regular routines, such as [making time for exercise](#) and eating a healthy diet. Ironically, not taking care of yourself can cause more stress and anxiety, leading to a vicious circle of holiday stress. So hit the gym and take a [fitness class](#), go for a power [walk](#), or just spread out a mat and do some [yoga stretches](#).
7. **Recharge.** Even if your hectic holiday schedule only allows you to spend a few minutes on yourself, take that time to go someplace quiet to recharge your batteries. Wherever and however you refresh your spirit depends on your individual preference. It could be a few minutes of quiet in a church, or a walk in a park. You could

even take yourself to a day spa for a manicure and quick neck massage. Another quick and no-cost idea: Go into an empty room in your house, hang a "do not disturb" sign on the door, and do some stretches while listening to some soothing music or sounds of nature.