



HOW TO COMBAT HOLIDAY STRESS

Ready or not, the holidays are upon us. For many, “Tis the season to be jolly,” but for others, it’s more of a “Bah, humbug.” The difference in mood could depend on your expectations for the season and how you respond to holiday stress.

No matter where you fall on the holiday mood scale, these stress-reduction techniques can help you get the most out of this time of year.

■ FIND THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRESS

It may seem obvious, but ask yourself what the cause is. Worried about gathering during the pandemic? Are you taking care of others’ needs at the expense of your own? Is it overspending? Overeating? Once you’ve determined the source of your seasonal stress, you can develop a plan for managing it.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Consider planning virtual holiday gatherings to cut down on COVID-19 risks. You can do things like share a meal together by eating at the same time over video chat, call a loved one and put your phone on speaker so anyone you live with can join in the conversation too, and exchange short video clips of special moments throughout the day.
- If you struggle with overindulging, be proactive throughout the season. Plan your meals, shop for groceries in advance, and consider healthy snacks and/or dishes to stay away from the foods that might not be right for you.
- If money is a factor, establish a monetary budget and stick to it. Check for coupons or special sales to help you save money. You can also consider creating DIY presents, participating in gift exchanges, or shopping at thrift shops to stretch your budget even further.

■ PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN WELL-BEING

One of the primary ways you can stay healthy is by keeping a daily routine. Sure, things are often busier this time of year, but don’t use that as an excuse to neglect your exercise and sleep.

Spend time outdoors if you can for a little phototherapy; sunshine is especially good for those who are suffering from less daylight during winter. Take a break to restore your inner calm and recharge your batteries with something you enjoy (like your favorite music or a good book). Consider cutting down social media use.

■ TURN OUTWARDS

One of the best ways to get out of your own head is by turning your focus toward others.

Express gratitude and generosity when you can. Make a list of all the blessings you still have in this difficult year. Find ways to give to someone else. Look for something to be thankful for each day. Volunteer.

Bottom line? Making an impact on others will make a difference for you too.

■ REMEMBER WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT

Ultimately, the best way to enjoy the season is to remember what it means to you.

If there’s a silver lining to 2020, it’s that many people have reoriented their perspective back to the things that matter most: being with loved ones, helping others, and seeing each day as a gift.

Though this year’s holiday season will likely be very different than what we’ve been used to, we can still make the most of it.