



Don't let stress ruin your holiday spirit

Here we are, right in the middle of holiday season. Are you feeling cool, calm and collected or is your stress level going up?

If you're feeling relaxed and happy, kudos to you! For most people, however, stress can be at an all-time high during the holidays. So if all the cooking, shopping, sending cards and decorating have you frazzled, you're not alone.

Make a decision to turn down the stress

Even though we're still in the midst of the holidays, you have control over what you do—and don't do—right now and for the next few weeks. It's not too late to make changes that may help you feel better.

Need a little mid-holiday tune-up? Consider these ideas:

- **Cut back on spending...now.** One of the worst things we do to ourselves is to overspend during the holidays. It's not too late to re-examine your upcoming expenses and cut back where you can.

- **Be mindful of the “holiday five.”** Many of us put on five pounds or more this time of year. Why? Partying and food are central themes for the holidays. If you already feel your clothes getting tight, you might consider steps like these:

- Don't starve yourself all day to get ready for a party. Eat normal or light meals so you arrive hungry but not ravenous.
- If there's a buffet, go through it only once and then turn your back on it so you're not tempted.
- Be picky about what you eat. There are lots of yummy, high-calorie treats. Ask your host to point you to the healthiest options.

- **Check your mood-o-meter.** Feeling tired or cranky? Many normal routines get interrupted during the holidays. Plus your workload may seem bigger than ever when added to holiday activities. These things can have a big impact on your mood and energy.

Some people also feel sad because the holidays may not be perfect.

The solution? Look out for you right now

Push away stress by taking better care of yourself starting today.

- **Try to get 6-8 hours of sleep every night.** Holiday time or not, we all need sleep to feel good.
- **Maintain your exercise routine.** Exercise is a natural stress reliever. Think of exercise as an appointment you need to keep — not an optional activity. Do something every day whether it's a walk or a workout.
- **Respect your right to say no.** You don't need to attend every party, eat every treat or drink too much. Do things that make you comfortable and happy.
- **Be real about your feelings.** No one is upbeat all the time — and that includes during holiday season. If you feel down about relationship issues, money, missing loved ones or anything else, talk to a friend, spiritual leader or mental health professional.

Sure, it's holiday time.
Still, real life goes on.
Remember to keep your
work, personal and holiday
expectations realistic.
You'll feel better physically,
mentally and emotionally.



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