

Give yourself a gift this holiday season

Protect your health with these
stress management tips



During the holidays, cheer and joy can be found in television shows, the music on the radio, even in the decorations you display at home. However, stress can also make an appearance in the whirlwind of holiday activities.

Between all the gatherings with family and friends, traveling, and finding the perfect gifts to give, it's not unusual to feel stressed and a bit worn out. For those also coping with loss or loneliness, the holidays can be an especially difficult time. It's important to acknowledge those feelings, identify your stress triggers, and find healthy ways to manage them so you can enjoy the holiday season.

Stress warning signs

The early signs of stress aren't always obvious, but if you typically notice any of the following symptoms around the holiday season, it may be an indication that your stress level is too high.

- “ Muscle tension or headaches
- “ Irritability or sadness
- “ Inability to focus or remember things
- “ Lack of energy
- “ Trouble falling or staying asleep
- “ Teeth grinding or jaw clenching
- “ Lack of appetite or upset stomach

Reduce your stress

It can be difficult to get a handle on stress once it sets in. That's why it can help to prevent stress from taking over in the first place by improving situations you can control. This includes:

- “ **Setting realistic expectations on what you can accomplish.** It can be difficult to cut back on commitments, especially during the holiday season, but doing so can help you stay well. Remember, it's okay to say “no.”
- “ **Planning ahead to prevent problems.** If you know there are certain things, people, or situations that cause you stress during the holidays, come up with a plan for how to handle them so you're prepared.
- “ **Prioritizing what's important when many things need your attention.** Treating everything as the most important thing on your to-do list is a good way to build stress. Try to prioritize and take on tasks one at a time.
- “ **Asking for help from family and friends.** Whether you're planning a party or you need someone to talk to, lean on your support system to keep your stress levels low.

If stress does manage to take hold, you may want to try the following suggestions to help regain a calmer frame of mind:

- “ Try relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and meditation.
- “ Start an aerobic exercise routine.
- “ Confide in trusted friends or loved ones.

Stress that builds up or lasts too long can take a toll on your health and well-being. It affects your job, relationships, and enjoyment of life. If you're finding it hard to cope with stress this holiday season, call your doctor or a mental health professional. They can guide you on how to respond effectively to stressful situations and help you generate positive thoughts and feelings.



Take your health in your own hands.

You can find more information on how to keep your mind and body feeling great at [healthlink.com](https://www.healthlink.com).