

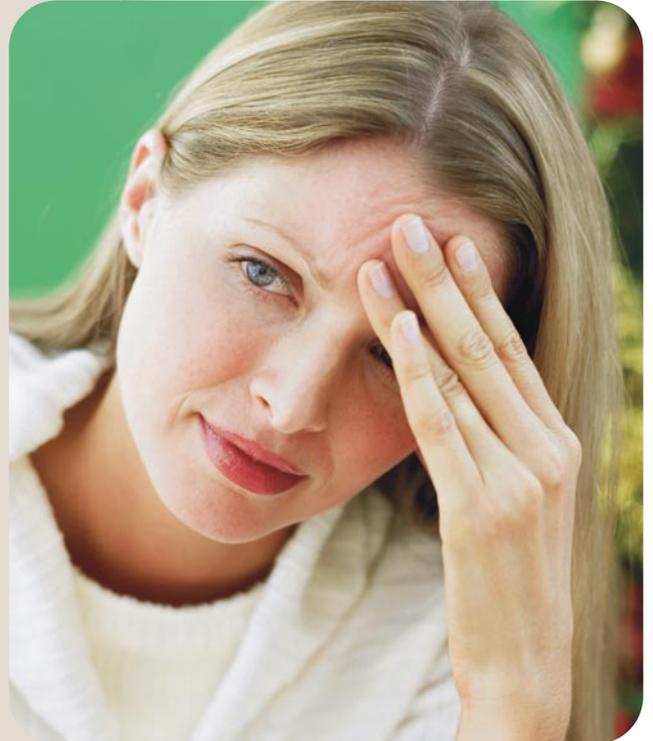
MANAGING Holiday STRESS

For most people, the holidays are a time for fun and family. Unfortunately, they may also be a time of increased stress.

While many people enjoy holiday tasks such as shopping for gifts, decorating, making special foods, and planning gatherings, finding time to fit these activities into an already full schedule can be difficult. Some people may find that they are stressed or anxious or feel like the holidays aren't as fun as they once were.

Setting manageable boundaries is one way to handle the stresses of the holiday season. If the upcoming holidays have you feeling anxious, try these tips:

- Compare holiday schedules with friends and extended family before scheduling gatherings. Consider holding joint get-togethers or having potluck dinners.
- Consider which family traditions still make sense based on your current situation. If it is getting hard to sustain certain events, consider eliminating them from the calendar.
- Be clear about the amount of time you will be spending with different family members. If conflict occurs or people are disappointed, stay calm and look for ways to compromise. Don't rearrange your plans to accommodate someone else unless you feel it is in your best interest.
- If you have young children who are in school or day care, determine how you will cover school breaks or facility closures as early as possible.
- Don't rely on your memory — write things down. Make lists of tasks that need to be accomplished and document the details of family plans so you don't miss out on important events.
- Set sensible limits and realistic expectations on gifts.



While it may be tempting to splurge, it's important to avoid creating financial difficulties that will haunt you later in the year. Put yourself on a reasonable budget and stick to it.

- If you are taking a trip to the mall, consider going on a weeknight or early in the shopping season to avoid the rush.
- If you are short of cash or ideas, try giving a "service gift" to friends and family. Consider volunteering a day of errand running for a busy working

parent or providing home-cooked meals to a friend who rarely spends time in the kitchen.

- If you are traveling by car, carry extra winter clothes, blankets, and a flashlight and keep your cell phone charged. Avoid traveling at night or during a storm unless absolutely necessary. If you are using public transportation, be prepared for weather delays and crowded terminals. Check your airline's website or app to make sure your flight is on schedule before you head to the airport.

In addition to setting boundaries about holiday activities, it is important to manage stress and maintain wellness. Ways to stay healthy during the holiday season include:

- **Eat right.** Eat balanced meals that include vegetables and whole grains. Make sure you drink plenty of water as well.
- **Stick to your exercise routine.** Taking time to exercise is more important than ever. Exercise will help you work off extra calories from holiday treats and manage stress.
- **Get enough sleep.** Most experts recommend that adults get 7-8 hours per night. Sleep will help you feel rested and ready to handle the excitement of the holidays, while also assisting with regulating your metabolism.
- **Take time for you.** Relaxation time will help you cope with the holiday rush. An hour of reading, a walk, a hot bath, or an afternoon nap will do wonders for your ability to enjoy the holiday.

- **Keep in mind that the holidays coincide with flu and cold season.** If you haven't had a flu shot yet, consider getting one. Good nutrition, sufficient rest, and washing your hands on a frequent basis will also help bolster your immune system. Remember, nothing ruins holiday fun faster than getting sick.



- **If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation.** Never drink and drive — call a cab or plan for a designated driver.
- **Acknowledge feelings of grief or depression.** If you find yourself feeling sad or overwhelmed, talk to family and friends. LifeMatters can also help with handling the holiday blues.

If holiday stress is taking a toll, LifeMatters can help. Professional assistance is available every day of the year, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

LifeMatters® by Empathia professionals are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year to discuss a variety of concerns.

Call anytime.

1-800-367-7474

Toll-Free United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico
From overseas, call collect to 262-574-2500

Visit **LifeMatters®** online at **mylifematters.com**

Language assistance services in your preferred spoken and written languages are available at no cost by calling **1-800-367-7474**.