

HOLIDAY SURVIVAL

Plan for a Smoother Holiday Season

The winter holiday season can be fun and festive. It can also be stressful and tiring. At this time of year people often find themselves trying to keep up with shopping, decorating, cooking, entertaining, kids' school events and family gatherings. With so much going on, it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

So it may help to take a fresh look at specific aspects of the holidays that have caused you stress in the past. Can you think of some changes you can make to give you a bit more comfort and joy this year?

However you celebrate, it's important to take care of your physical and mental health throughout the holidays. It's also good to practice moderation in your celebrating. This helps you maintain your overall balance despite the sometimes odd hours you may keep over the holidays.

In this issue of *Your Source*, we examine ways to meet the challenges of the holiday season. This includes:

- Limiting your stress while completing various holiday tasks.
- Creating new holiday traditions as your family changes over time.
- Cutting down on money worries by sticking to a budget for holiday spending.

Having a new plan for this year's holidays can make a difference!

Go online today! Log on to access *Holiday Survival* under the Library/In the Spotlight section. There you'll find information on keeping yourself and your family on a healthy track during the holidays.



Take time to identify the things that cause you stress during the holidays, and develop a new plan for handling them this year.

Limit Your Holiday Stress

Stress can often accompany the holiday hustle. Here are some tips for staying in balance during this busy time of year.

Set limits and keep it simple. Be realistic about what you can do prior to and during the holidays. Don't take on too much, and be sure to ask for help with getting things done. Don't feel obligated to accept every invitation or request.

Shop for gifts online. This can greatly reduce time spent hunting for bargains in stores, while minimizing the stress of parking lots and crowds.

Avoid procrastinating. Develop an extended to-do schedule so you won't have to rush so much. Start scratching items off the list as early as possible. Putting off holiday tasks until the last minute just causes more stress.

Don't forget to exercise. If you have a workout plan, stay with it faithfully over the holidays. This will help keep stress in check and burn some of those extra calories.

Make some time for yourself. Unplugging by yourself for short periods of relaxation between tasks or events can help you keep balanced.



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Creating New Holiday Traditions

We all know that families change over time. In the cycle of life, some people will leave the family, while new individuals will join. Sometimes it helps to reassess your old holiday traditions to see if they still work for your family in its current form. It may be best to strike a balance between continuing with certain past traditions and starting some new ones.

Focus on the “Now”

If the activities you’ve always done seem to be creating stress or conflict in your family now, consider changing them. When planning rituals or celebrations, think of ways to make them meaningful for the family mix you have today. Let go of activities that you no longer enjoy.



Gather New Ideas for Holiday Celebrations

Ask the whole family about their favorite holiday traditions, and also for new ideas. You can include kids, parents, extended family members and friends. It can also be good to look to the past for a few good ideas. Try to recall your warm childhood holiday memories and what made them special. Consider such holiday traditions that you could realistically refresh and pass along to your children.

Be Creative

Always be on the lookout for new things you can do with your family during the holidays. This could include low- or no-cost activities such as going ice skating together, visiting a big downtown holiday display, or attending a community interfaith or cultural celebration. Also consider taking advantage of today’s technologies, e.g., video chat, to bring together family members who may be far away at this time.

When to Let Go

If everyone can’t agree on whether to do a certain activity or event, then it’s probably best to leave it off the list this year. Making sure everyone’s input is considered can help the family better enjoy this holiday season.

Now That’s An Idea!

Holidays on a Budget

Plan to limit your spending. Estimate the total amount that you can afford this year, without buying items on credit that you don’t start paying for until next year. Don’t exceed that limit!

Consider gift alternatives. Decide how the spending for each person on your list will fit into your budgeted total. Then look for ways to trim the amounts for each person through less expensive gifts.

Focus on the thoughtfulness, not the quantity. Consider giving homemade gifts such as baked items and handmade crafts. These are often less expensive than store-bought gifts, and are always more appreciated.

Shop early. Last-minute gift buying usually results in spending more than you planned.

Shop alone. You’ll be less likely to be distracted from your established gift list and budget.

Seek savings in numbers. When groups of people are involved in gift giving, draw names and put a dollar limit on gifts.

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