



Holiday Stress: How to stay calm during the mad scramble of the holidays

The holidays can be fun, but they also can be a source of great stress — and no wonder. The holidays are often depicted as a magical time when people reconcile and dreams come true.

How Can You Deal With Continuing Family Problems During The Holidays?

Being realistic is the first step. If you have bad feelings about someone, try and avoid him or her and not make an issue of it but don't pretend that all is well. This will enable you to feel true to yourself and less stressed out.

Do Financial Pressures Stress People Out to the Point of Ruining the Holiday Spirit?

Knowing your spending limit is also a way to relieve holiday stress. People believe that they have to go out and buy gifts because it's the holidays, even if they can't afford to do so. Not only is it stressful to feel that you have to buy everyone an expensive gift, but you'll be stressed for the rest of the year trying to pay off your bills. You can show love and caring by getting something that you know is meaningful and personal for that person that doesn't have to cost a lot.

How Do Time Pressures Affect People Around the Holidays?

People shouldn't have to put their lives on pause or totally rearrange their schedules either because of the holidays. Learn to prioritize the invitations you accept and don't feel that you have to go to every holiday gathering.

How Does a Person Deal With the Holidays When He or She Has Just Experienced A Recent Tragedy, Death or Romantic Break-up?

If you're feeling really out of sorts because of any chronic or current stressors, like a death or recent romantic break-up, you may want to avoid some of the festivities because they are so out of sync with how you're feeling. Try to tell those around you what you really need, since they may not know how to help you, and ask for their understanding if you decline an activity.

How Do You Cope With Kids Who Want Everything For The Holidays and Have No Sense of What Things Cost?

Parents need to tell their children to be realistic. It is OK to say to your child that a certain toy is too expensive. And even Santa Claus has limited funds and has to choose what to give because he has a very long list. You can also tell your children that Mom and Dad and Santa Claus will try to choose the most suitable present for the child. Children have to learn that their wish is not someone's command and to curb their desires for instant gratification.

What Are Some Good Coping Strategies?

Take stock of your expectations and make sure they're realistic. Don't expect more of this time of year than of any other. Take a break from holiday music and television specials if you find that they're turning you into "Scrooge."

Most people dread the holidays because their inner experience is so different from what is being hyped. You should trust your own instincts and don't try to be what you're not. Keep up your normal routine and know that this day will pass too.

If, however, you are unable to shake what you think are "holiday blues" your feelings may not be about the holidays, but about other things in your life. If you need help in sorting out or dealing with this issue, a psychologist is a person with the training to help you do so. Call 1-800-964-2000 to get information about referrals. - **Thanks to Dorothy Cantor, Psy.D., a private practitioner in Westfield, N.J., and a former president of the American Psychological Association.**