



## LEARN TO MANAGE *STRESS* DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Everyone feels stress at one time or another, especially during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. It's a normal and healthy reaction to a change or a challenge. However, holiday triggers and responsibilities can bring an abundance of stress and pressures that can lead to a meltdown if not balanced.

Keep holiday stress to a minimum with practical tips that can help you enjoy the most wonderful time of the year.

## LEARN TO RECOGNIZE THE *STRESSORS*.

The first step in managing stress is recognizing what is the cause. These are called stressors. Everyone feels stress in a different way and for different reasons. Holidays bring an array of demands that include handling financial pressures, entertaining, dealing with strenuous relationships, and maintaining family traditions. Once you understand where your stress is coming from, you can come up with ways to deal with your stressors.

# FIND *HEALTHY* STRESS BUSTERS.

If the holidays take a toll on you emotionally, try to regroup before stress hits its peak.

- 1. Acknowledge your feelings.** Managing the holidays during a pandemic is sure to bring challenges. Especially if someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it is normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- 2. Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community and social events. There are many virtual events being hosted, and some organizations have started to hold socially distanced events that adhere to recommended safety guidelines. Volunteering your time to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- 3. Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. Video chat has become an extremely popular tool and new tradition for staying connected.
- 4. Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives:
  - Donate to a charity in someone's name.
  - Give homemade gifts.
  - Start a family gift exchange.
- 5. Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, cooking, visiting friends, and other activities. By planning, it will help avoid last-minute scrambling like forgetting to buy specific ingredients for a dinner or making reservations. Also, make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

## AVOID *UNHEALTHY STRESS* RELIEF.

The holidays are known for the indulgences we long for every year with Thanksgiving feasts, holiday desserts, and New Year toasts. When coping with stress, it is important to remember not to over-indulge, which includes:

- Eating too much
- Smoking cigarettes
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Sleeping too much or not sleeping enough

These behaviors may help you feel better at first, but they may hurt you more than they help. Instead, use the Healthy Stress Busters tips mentioned to help reduce your stress in a healthy and manageable way.