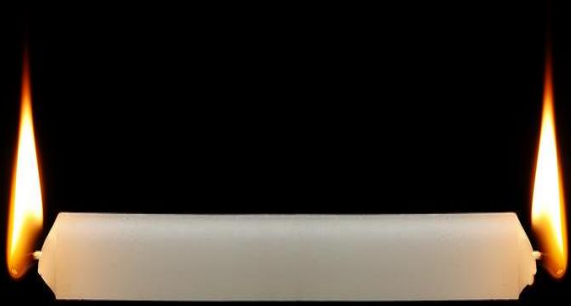


GIVE A GIFT TO YOURSELF

ARE YOU LIGHTING THE HOLIDAY CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS?



Let's face it, the holidays can be a particularly stressful time for most of us. The shopping, cooking and cleaning, decorating, party planning, and too many commitments! Time with relatives you may see once a year, and family drama you would rather not participate in. The anticipation of a fun holiday season has the kids bouncing off the walls, and you can't seem to find a moment with that warm cup of eggnog you have been looking forward to. Who wouldn't feel stressed? Many of us have a tough time managing everything that is going on. Be proactive in managing holiday stress this year and find some peace in the chaos.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Often, the holidays become more about everyone else's expectations than our own. What others might expect, however, may not be what is a good fit for you or your family. Give yourself the gift of letting go of expectations.

Embrace the idea that nothing will be perfect and recognize the difference between what you CAN do and what you WANT to do.

Name the things that stress you out and do your best to alleviate the stressors. What is it about the holidays that fills you up? Keep the focus on presence, not perfection, and create the holiday that you want to have. After all, the holidays are about opening your heart and home to those you love and creating an atmosphere of generosity and kindness. It's as simple as that!



It's normal to have some anxiety about pressures and obligations this time of year. Protect yourself and learn the art of saying "No!"

Opt out of unnecessary gift-giving. Pass on gifts to teachers, neighbours, cousins, etc. Instead, write a letter, send a card, or arrange a visit.

Say no to parties you don't want to attend. Politely thank the person for the invite and explain that you have a prior commitment. It might be a bubble bath, but you don't have to justify your time and needs.

Delegate duties. Hosting a holiday meal or get-together? Create a "no fuss" approach. Make it a potluck, designate place setters, servers, and a clean-up crew. You might not feel like Martha Stewart, but "It's a good thing."

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PUT YOURSELF FIRST

Find time to exercise.

Any form of exercise can be a stress reliever.

- Feeling rushed, scattered, and pulled in too many directions? Try yoga for its calming effect on your body, mind, and spirit.
- Need to boost your mood or add some extra energy to your day? Lift weights! Resistance training can boost endorphins even more than a cardio-based exercise, and has been shown to alleviate stress and anxiety.
- Get outside. Outdoor physical activity provides the benefits of fresh air and sunshine. Take a nature walk and breathe!

Fuel your body and your mind with healthy nutrition.

A busy lifestyle often equates to an increased amount of processed convenience foods.

- Focus on nutrient density to give your body what it needs to power you through the holiday season.
- Keep healthy, portable snacks readily available. Pack trail mix in the car and keep the fridge stocked with bags of chopped veggies and Greek yogurt cups.
- Do the holidays have you constantly on the move? Take a smoothie to go and jam pack it with protein, fibre, and good fats. Include nutrient-dense foods like rich coloured fruits, chia seeds, coconut oil, and greens!

Develop and maintain a budget.

Finances are stressful! A budget is a good coping strategy.

- Create a spending plan for holiday expenses. Set aside an amount and budget accordingly.
- Plan early and watch for sales. Shop online to compare pricing and avoid the stress of holiday crowds.
- Draw names for gift-giving and consider a homemade or practical gift if your budget is tight.

Take a time-out.

Give yourself a break!

- The holidays can feel less like vacation and more like another full-time job! Take a time-out and schedule an appointment for yourself!
- Save one night a week for a hot, relaxing bath, a date with your partner, enjoying a holiday activity such as ice skating, or a quiet moment in your favourite café.



Sources: <https://www.webmd.com/balance/features/keep-holiday-stress-minimum-learn-say-no#1>