



## Coping with Holiday Stress: 5 Essential Tips

The holidays are a time of joy, love, family and friendship; though many of us may not like to admit it, the holidays are also a time of stress. Find out what measures you can take to manage the stress and heighten the joy!

### **The Stress Factor at Holiday Time**

Between the physical demands of traveling and socializing, and the emotional aspects of meeting with family, holiday time can potentially be very taxing. Environmental factors, even on a subtle scale, can also influence the general mood.

For example, at family gatherings during the holidays, emotions from the past often come up between family members. The abundance of sugar and alcohol, paired with the insufficient daylight of short winter days can further heighten emotional reactions and stress.

Without the proper outlook and adequate time-outs for relaxation, we get our nerves and emotions wound up into a tight ball, leaving us stressed, drained of energy, and in the wrong frame of mind to enjoy our loved ones.

### **1. Slow Down and Lighten Up**

Most of us make our holiday plans first and then figure out how we're going to manage the logistics later. This sort of over-commitment and attempt to please everyone is sure to lead to stress and hurt feelings. Realize your limitations first and cut back on the commitments in your calendar of events. The more you lighten your load, the more you will enjoy your friends and family when you are at a gathering.

### **2. Be in the Present**

Start off your day with an intention of being aware and in the present all through the day. Create and declare an affirmation that will set the tone of your whole day. For example: "Today I want to be clear in my mind, so that I can make the correct decisions. I want to be healthy and connected to my loved ones and myself."

Not only will you be better equipped to cope with stress, you might even find some new perspectives that you didn't see before. When you start with awareness, you have the opportunity to enjoy a healthy outlook and a good mood all through the day.

### **3. Naptime: Not Just For Children**

How many of us feel guilty when we are not constantly in motion? Most parents know that overtired and hurried children are headed for a breakdown.

Unfortunately, adults are woefully unaware of the impact of stress on their own emotional lives. Rest and relaxation are crucial for renewal and balance, and never more than at holidays when we are constantly conversing with family members and speedily traveling from one place to the next with crowded throngs of other holiday-goers.

Activities for children like naptime and quiet time are designed to help them rest. You can also benefit from structured times for relaxation. Even a 15-minute nap or meditation session by your self can reinvigorate you.

### **4. Be Thankful**

Sometimes when you are in a bad mood, it helps to put your life in perspective. If your basic needs are being met, be thankful. If you are surrounded by friends and loved ones, be thankful. Add up everything you are thankful for in your head and see if your mood doesn't improve.

### **5. Hit Your Reset Button with Breathing Exercise**

For thousands of years meditation has been practiced in the East as a tool for inner peace and spirituality. This doesn't mean you have to be on a remote mountaintop to meditate. You can do it anywhere and at any time; all you really need is a quiet corner. Meditation is a great method to decompress and melt tension away during your busy day.

Try this breathing exercise, adapted from Chinese qigong meditation. Slow down and deepen each breath you take. With every exhalation, utter the word calm in your mind and breathe out the tension from each part of your body, beginning from the top of your head and working your way down to your feet. Release the remaining tension through your toes and the bottoms of your feet. You will be amazed at how energized you feel!