

Insights
December 15, 2017

Dealing with Holiday Stress

Ahh, the holidays. Going home to visit family. Finding the perfect gift for loved ones. Enjoying all of your favorite fattening foods (and adding a few inches to the old waistline). All of these things, typically associated with the holidays, *should* be fun, right? For many people, though, this time of the year is not one filled with joy but with stress. While some holiday angst is unavoidable, it really comes down to how you manage it.

One of the most important things you can do during this time is **keep yourself physically healthy** so that you're better prepared to handle whatever (family drama, office party disaster, cookie exchange, etc.) comes your way. This means maintaining your exercise routine (or, if you don't have one, commit to at least fifteen minutes of moderate exercise every day), getting plenty of sleep, watching your alcohol intake, and finding some quiet time to relax.

Boundaries are another essential tool for keeping stress in check. You really *don't* have to accept every party invitation you receive, nor do you have to stay the full week as requested at your parents' home (when you already know that by Day Two, you're going to be miserable). Set limits ahead of time and stick with them. As they say, "No, thank you" *is* a complete sentence requiring no further explanation.

It's also important to **manage your expectations**. If your brother has forgotten to buy you a present for the past, say, forty-two years, it's unlikely he'll remember this year. Accept it and let it go, focusing instead on the things that make you feel happy, like watching your kitten batting away at the Christmas tree decorations. Or your favorite uncle, lighting the menorah.

This time of the year requires a strong network of family and friends in order to soldier on. Reach out, stay connected, and if you're feeling out of sorts, particularly anxious, or depressed, don't hesitate to talk to a professional counselor.

Wishing you a stress-free holiday season!