



25 Ways To Beat Holiday Stress

If the thought of upcoming holidays fill you with dread, you're not alone. Many people get stretched pretty thin this time of year by money and social obligations. Here are 25 ways to keep your sleigh on track this season.

1. Set realistic expectations. Things aren't going to go perfectly and that's ok. You can't control every outcome, but you can prepare yourself mentally by visualizing your calm, positive response to negative events.

2. Get moving. It's not the chores, shopping, and Uncle Stanley's visit that's stressing you out – it's your anticipation of them! Act now by creating a to-do list, and tackle one or two items per week through the holidays.

3. Avoid the shotgun approach. You'll accomplish more by tackling one thing at time and giving it your full attention.

4. Budget your holiday expenditures. Set per person limits on gift giving and stick to them. Don't overlook special outlays for travel, decorations, food and entertainment.

5. Pay as you go. Charging your purchases may delay your bills, but knowing they're waiting for you in January increases stress.

6. Play to your strengths. Utilize what you have the most of – time, money, or creativity.

7. Pare down on gift giving. For extended family and social groups, suggest each person give just one gift by drawing names out of a hat.

8. Cut your costs. Give inexpensive but thoughtful gifts like home-baked goods or hand-made photo albums. Bundling several small items around a theme provides a low cost, personal touch.

9. Don't lose the meaning. If consumerism has you down, check out for awhile with inspirational literature and reconnect with what makes the holidays special and important.

10. Participate in reaffirming activities. Spend time at church and in your community with like-minded people.

11. Take some time off work. Don't cram all errands and shopping trips into the precious little time you have outside work hours. Avoiding the weekend crowds will allow you to get more done.

12. Do a solo power shopping event. Turbo charge your efficiency by avoiding distractions and competing agendas.

13. Take advantage of the internet. Most sites offer free shipping for the holidays. Find great unique and inexpensive gifts at sites like lillianvernon.com.

14. Ask for help. If you're playing host, assign chores and duties to your spouse and children.

15. Cheer loves company. Combine household holiday prep with socializing. Ask some friends over for a baking and gift wrapping party.

16. Lighten your cooking duties. It's perfectly acceptable to cook a main course and ask dinner guests to bring a side.

17. Get on the same page with family. Come to a consensus on what activities are most important and cut out the extras that add work and scheduling pressure.

18. Recruit a child wrangler. Kids underfoot can add to the stress of big events. Designate one adult to organize games and fun activities in a confined space.

19. Avoid isolation. The holidays can be a depressing time for those who've lost loved ones. Get out of the house whenever possible and reconnect with old friends.

20. Help someone who needs you. Nothing melts away personal troubles like helping someone else overcome theirs.

21. Pass down wisdom and tradition. Instead of mourning the passing of better times, keep those memories alive by sharing them with the next generation.

22. Review your life priorities. Combat your hectic schedule by reassessing what matters the most to you.

23. Forgive someone. Let go of past resentments to make room for future happiness.

24. Make a gratitude list. Review it whenever you're feeling depressed, anxious, depressed or stressed out.

25. Take a time out. Indulge in things you stopped doing because you "just don't have time for anymore" like a long lunch or a night out with friends.