

I'll have a

I'm dreaming of a

White

May your days be merry and

YOUR HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE



Welcome to the holiday season—that whirlwind of gift-giving, decorating, holiday parties, countless activities—and who are we kidding, stress. While our imaginations are filled with images of bountiful feasts and idyllic family gatherings, a recent poll showed that more than 80% of us find the holiday season to be ‘some-what’ or ‘very’ stressful. Wow, that’s a reality check. Maybe we should consider handling things differently this year. Somewhere between a Grinch-like avoidance of the holidays and an overindulgent, holiday frenzy, there is a middle path.

peaceful

Use this guide to help you create a more peaceful holiday.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Beloved friends and family, beautifully wrapped gifts, and parties galore. Those are all good things, but as the old saying goes—everything in

moderation.

Most holiday **stress** falls into three categories: *relationships, finances and time.*

Because we often have higher expectations for this season than for other times of the year, we may overplease, overspend, and overschedule—all in an attempt to create a perfect holiday. Trouble is, all this overdoing can leave us more frazzled than fulfilled.

Define Your Expectations

Take stock. Are your expectations for the holidays realistic? Taking a moment to reflect on this question is the first step to managing

holiday stress *List on a piece of paper* what you

expect from yourself and your family during the holidays. Hidden within these expectations you'll probably find your particular holiday stressors — the unique things that can cause you *stress*.

Simplify

Under each item in the list, write down what changes you can make to prevent or reduce that stress. It's okay to re-evaluate traditions. Perhaps you had an expectation that you should prepare the entire holiday meal from scratch, just the way mom always did it. But would anyone really mind if you purchase the dessert from the bakery? Would others be willing to bring a dish?

Another way to lighten the holiday load is to limit social events to only one day of each weekend, leaving the other for quiet and family time. Make the changes that will be most helpful to you. Let go of those unrealistic goals, such as creating the most dazzling holiday atmosphere or attending every party.

piece of paper

EXPECTATION _____

SIMPLIFICATION _____

EXPECTATION _____

SIMPLIFICATION _____

EXPECTATION _____

SIMPLIFICATION _____

EXPECTATION _____

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EXPECTATION _____

SIMPLIFICATION _____

Let go of the “should do’s”

Share Your Plans

If you’ve decided to let go of some things to make your holiday more satisfying, share your new plans with others so you are not struggling against their expectations. You may be surprised that they’re just as relieved as you are to make changes. In fact, a recent poll showed that 77 percent of people said they’d prefer a simpler holiday.

However you overhaul your holiday, the goal is to become aware of all the choices you have. and instead focus on what truly brings you and your family happiness. Odds are, it’s not the homemade cakes or the perfectly wrapped gifts, it’s the time to

and slow down

connect

with

one

another.

When children aren’t enjoying themselves, they can let it be known

loudly.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF TIME SPENT WITH CHILDREN DURING THE HOLIDAYS:

- Show children that they are the priority—not the shopping, decorating and partying.
- Ask the children to help you with your gift list. Their insights may be powerful.
- Inform children of changes to their daily routine and surround them with familiar things.
- If you have small children, reduce the amount of baking, decorating, entertaining and socializing you did before they were in the family. Keep everything simple and enjoy the children.
- Explain the meanings of holiday traditions to your children and have them participate in starting new ones.
- If your child is afraid of the man with the beard and fuzzy red suit, don’t worry about it. You’ve obviously done a good job making him or her leery of strangers.
- Be aware of children’s limits before they demonstrate that they are reaching them.
- Try to limit social obligations to two a week if it means time away from the children.
- Let children participate in decorating, baking and gift wrapping if they can handle the responsibility.

LITTLE DRUMMERBOYS AND GIRLS
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OPEN UP THE PRESENT

The emphasis on family togetherness during the holidays is one reason we cherish the time, but sometimes that magnifies the absence of a loved one. Carols and rituals can conjure memories of the happy times when the family was all together, so cherish them as memories and keep them in the past. Then, acknowledge that this year's holiday season is different and work to make the **present** the best you can.

Family Members and Friends to Remember

FOLLOW THESE TIPS:

- Get together with as many family members and friends as you can and have fun creating new memories.
- Nurture yourself physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Let children make holiday cards to send to the missed person or to place on the grave of a loved one.
- Practice holiday **PEPP** (People, Exercise, Purpose and Play). Spend time with the people you care about, be sure to exercise regularly, participate in activities that give you a sense of purpose, and do something playful just for the fun of it.



RED, GREEN AND BLUE

Everyone isn't happy during the holidays. Negative feelings can intensify when contrasted with the joy expected of the holidays. Factors that can contribute to the holiday blues include:

- Associating the holidays with unresolved family issues or a painful childhood.
- Ignoring feelings of sadness, loneliness, or depression in an effort to maintain "holiday cheer."
- Facing the loss of a loved one with whom you have shared the holidays.
- Coping with changes in family obligations, particularly after a recent marriage or divorce.
- Drinking more alcohol, which is often more readily available during the holidays (Avoid drinking alcohol to ward off negative feelings. Alcohol can intensify depression.)

Coping with the holiday blues

- Try something new. Take a vacation with a family member or friend.
- Spend time with people who care about you.
- Volunteer your time to help others. Spending time with those in need can help you feel less isolated.
- If you are religious, take time to reflect on the spiritual significance of the holidays.
- Try to appreciate the good things you have instead of focusing on the past.
- Stay active. Get out. Go for a walk. Window shop.
- Accept feelings of sadness or loneliness. These feelings might not go away just because it's the holidays.
- Get help if you need it. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help any time of the year.

HAVING GREENS ON NEW YEAR'S

The surest way to have money for the holidays is to save a little each month, all year. One guaranteed way to still have money after the holidays is to have a financial game plan. A good place to start is with creative gift-giving.



TRY THESE TIPS TO SEE WHICH ONES WORK FOR YOU:

- Develop a budget. Follow the budget.
- Decide how much you'll spend on each person and put the money in separate envelopes. When the money's gone from an envelope, stop spending on that person.
- Do your homework by scanning advertisements, catalogs and the Internet.
- Use the telephone to get answers to questions, to locate items and for directions.
- Agree with family and friends to set a limit on gift costs. Chances are, they'll be more than happy to oblige.
- Give group gifts to members of your family instead of individual ones.
- If everyone agrees, draw names with family members so you buy only one gift.
- Exchange baby sitting time or carpool miles with a friend or neighbor.
- Give gifts of time or service—the more rewarding, the most generous and least expensive gift of all.

Home

With family and friends, sometimes holiday visits can rekindle old conflicts of unhealthy patterns. Here are some tips to keep a smile on your face and the “fa-la-la” in your heart:

Sweet

Find a place where you can get away and take a breather from time to time.

Avoid controversial topics like politics, religion and money.

Home

Create a diversion. Whether it's a board game, movie or music, try to bring some entertainment to the festivities.

Give yourself permission to limit time with family members, if that will ease your stress.

Change the scenery. Get outdoors. Take a walk together. Exercise and fresh air are great stress relievers.

Studies show that the average American gains seven pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

Jump Start your *Resolutions*

- Treat yourself to some seasonal goodies like pumpkin pie, but try to resist foods that are available anytime of the year, such as brownies.
- Eat slowly. It takes a full 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain it's full. By eating fast, you could stuff yourself before you have time to realize you've already had enough.
- Always eat a little before you go to a party so you aren't very hungry when you arrive.
- Use a napkin instead of a plate at holiday parties; you can't put as much on a napkin.
- Wear clothes that are form-fitting, not baggy, so you feel thin and less likely to overindulge yourself.
- Alcohol is high in calories and can weaken your resolve. Drink in moderation or not at all. Remember to designate a driver who will not be drinking.
- Eat fiber-rich foods with complex carbohydrates. Things like fresh veggies, whole grains and fruit will keep you full longer and make you burn more calories to digest them.
- Reduce your caffeine intake. Caffeine is a drug that can cause irritability, nervousness and anxiety. Watch out for coffee, tea, cola and chocolates. Use in moderation.
- A 20 to 30 minute walk every day provides numerous benefits.
- Exercise before you go out socially. It will increase your sense of wellness and will suppress your appetite for a couple of hours.

WHEN IT'S TIME TO MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND:

- Make realistic resolutions.
- Include easily accomplished resolutions with those that are more difficult.
- Include a time-frame with each resolution.
- Write down your resolutions, keep a copy with you and refer to it often.

MERRY MISCELLANY

Since the 1970s, the Kennedy Space Center has made its shuttle landing facility available for emergency landing by Santa Claus should problems develop during his annual visit to children around the world!

If you received all of the gifts in the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," you would receive **364 gifts.**

Kwanzaa is a seven day celebration of African culture begun by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor at California State University in 1966. Celebrated from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa (which means "first fruits of the harvest") is meant to honor African heritage and present day life in America.

Hershey's started wrapping its Kisses in red, green, and silver foil for the first time in 1962. Hershey's now wraps up to 1,300 Hershey's Kisses a minute. That gives them the capacity to make approximately 33 million Hershey's Kisses a day, or more than 12 billion a year.

Hanukkah is celebrated every year between the end of November and the end of December. The eight day celebration commemorates the rededication of the Jerusalem temple, and the miracle of the sacred lamp that burned for eight days on a single day's oil.

The original ball lowered in Times Square on New Year's Eve back in 1907 was made of iron and wood and decorated with 100 light bulbs. The modern New Year's ball is made of Waterford crystal, covered with 696 light bulbs, 96 strobe lights, and 90 rotating pyramid mirrors.

Top 10 destinations for Christmas travel

1. Las Vegas, NV
2. Orlando, FL
3. New York, NY
4. Honolulu, HI
5. Chicago, IL
6. San Francisco, CA
7. San Diego, CA
8. Anaheim, CA
9. Lahaina, HI
10. Miami, FL

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

