



De-Stress Your Holidays

The holidays can be fun, but they also can be a source of great stress — and no wonder. The holidays are often depicted as a magical time when people reconcile and dreams come true.

How Can You Deal With Difficult Family Interactions During the Holidays?

Being realistic is the first step. Family dynamics typically revert to historic patterns when families come back together. You don't have to pretend that all is well, but, you can sidestep difficulties by anticipating them and planning on ways to temporarily separate and defuse.

Do Financial Pressures Stress You Out to the Point of Ruining the Holiday Spirit?

Knowing your spending limit is also a way to relieve holiday stress. People believe that they have to go out and buy gifts because it's the holidays, even if they can't afford to do so. Not only is it stressful to feel that you have to buy everyone a gift, but you'll be stressed for the rest of the year trying to pay off your bills. Perhaps this is the year to make a pact not to exchange gifts but to share time together. This could also help someone who isn't in a financial position to exchange gifts with you.

How Do Time Pressures Affect You Around the Holidays?

Putting routines on pause or totally rearranging schedules because of the holidays are the ingredients for exhaustion and chaos. Prioritize activities that are important and can fit around important replenishing activities like sleep, proper meals and exercise.

How Do You Deal With the Holidays When You Have Just Experienced A Recent Tragedy, Death or Break-up?

If you're feeling really out of sorts because of a loss or stressor, try to tell those around you what you really need, since they may not know how to help you. Ask for their understanding if you decline an activity or can't summon up the holiday spirit. Give yourself permission to grieve just as you would any other time of the year.

How Do You Cope With Kids Who Want Everything for the Holidays?

Parents need to tell their children to be realistic. It is OK to say to your child that a certain toy is too expensive. Even Santa Claus has limited funds and has to choose what most to give because he has a very long list. You can also tell your children that Mom and Dad and Santa Claus will try to choose the suitable present for the child. Children have to learn that their wish is not someone's command and to curb their desires for instant gratification.

How Do You Manage the Holidays If They Start Feeling Painful?

If you are unable to shake what you think are "holiday blues" your feelings may not be just about the holidays, but about other things in your life. If you need help in sorting out or dealing with painful thoughts or feelings, call your AFA EAP for confidential assistance. Call 1-800-424-2406.

*Adapted in part from the American Psychological Association at www.apa.org