

# How to De-Stress Your Holidays

December 19, 2011 issue  
Sensia Healthcare  
www.sensiahealthcare.com  
(414) 359-0800

The month of December can be full of fun and excitement, but it can also be a big source of physical, emotional or financial stress for many people. Here are 10 strategies to help you make it through to New Year's Day with your sanity intact!



1. Schedule some time for yourself. You can't take care of others and get all your holiday preparations done if you don't take care of yourself. Try to get at least 7 hours of sleep, fit in time for exercise (even if it's only 15-20 minutes some days), and eat healthy foods. Avoid skipping meals as it will only cause you to snack more or overeat at a later meal.
2. Spend within your means. Make a budget and stick to it. Consider picking names among relatives or friends rather than buying presents for multiple people. Have everyone bring a dish to pass to help manage the food costs of holiday meals.
3. Recognize your limits and practice saying "no" when people offer you more food or alcohol that you don't want. Be flexible with your expectations. Nothing usually turns out exactly as planned, so roll with the setbacks.
4. Walk away from no-win situations. Have a "safe spot" you can escape to if family gatherings get stressful. Accept things or family members that you cannot change. Prepare responses to things people say that make you uncomfortable.
5. Be as organized as possible so you don't have to duplicate your efforts. Make shopping lists and organize errands by their geographic locations. Run errands during your lunch hour or fit in a 20 minute walk if you don't think you'll get to it before or after work.
6. Don't schedule so many activities that you become exhausted. Determine what you enjoy the most and schedule time for it. Figure out what you enjoy least and cross it off your list.
7. Find a saying or scripture verse that is meaningful to you, and carry it with you to refer to it for comfort when you feel overwhelmed.
8. Be "positive" whenever you can; laugh as much as possible, especially at your own mistakes.
9. Make a pact with a loved one or friend to "just listen" to each other for 5 to 10 minutes every day. Don't interrupt, no advice giving, just listening!
10. Find time to be spiritual in your own way, either through religion, faith, meditation, giving thanks, art or your own expression of yourself.

Although exercise and healthy eating may be the first things to slip when life gets busy and stress levels increase, these are the habits that can be the most helpful in reducing and managing your stress. If you tend to eat, drink or smoke in response to stress, try relaxing in some other ways such as taking for a walk, taking a hot bath, reading, listening to music, stretching, cleaning, or talking to a friend. Eat when you're hungry, stop when you're full, take a short nap or go to bed when you're tired.

Mary Kelly, MS, RD, CD, CDE,  
mkelly@sensiahealthcare.com

*For more information regarding Sensia Healthcare's  
Wellness Programs, contact John Lerand at  
414-359-9440 or email him at: jlerand@sensiahealthcare.com.*