

Tips for surviving Holiday Stress & Depression



For some people, the holidays bring unwelcome guests — stress and depression. In an effort to pull off a perfect Hallmark holiday, you might find yourself facing an overwhelming dish of demands — work-related deadlines, planning the perfect party or shopping for the impossible to please relatives. Your holiday stress is real and you are not alone. Plan for stress just like you plan ahead for any calamity you want to avoid, with the following tips:

- **Acknowledge your feelings.** If a loved one has recently died or you aren't able to be with your loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness or grief. It's OK now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings; you can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- **Seek support.** If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or community, religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- **Be realistic.** As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to. But accept that you may have to let go of others.
- **Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.
- **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make one big food-shopping trip. Expect travel delays, especially if you're flying.
- **Learn to say no.** Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed.
- **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.
- **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do.
- **Forget about perfection.** Holiday TV specials are filled with happy endings. But in real life, people don't usually resolve problems within an hour or two. Accept imperfections in yourself and in others.
- **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for several weeks, call 211 or 1.800.684.2324 to speak to a hotline specialist.



HelpLine

Of Delaware and Morrow Counties, Inc.