



Top Ten Relaxation Tips for Reducing Holiday Stress

- 1. Create realistic expectations—don't try to make this the perfect holiday.** Set simple measures of success. Small joys are much easier to achieve, than having a perfect day.
- 2. Learn to say “no” to extra obligations that might stress you out.** Reflect on how you plan to spend your time, prioritize your obligations, and make realistic choices about your time commitments.
- 3. Take short relaxation breaks to let go of tension.** Whenever you notice you are getting stressed or anxious, simply (1) stop and pause for a moment, (2) take a deep breath, and (3) slowly exhale, releasing any tension you may be carrying.
- 4. Get involved in a volunteer activity where you help others.** Fewer activities result in greater satisfaction than giving selflessly from the heart. When you help others you are likely to capture a sense of belonging and inner joy for yourself.
- 5. Tap into your natural creativity and create a hand-made gift.** In addition to fostering a deeper connection between you and the recipient, making a gift by hand can also be a calm meditative experience, and provide an outlet to express your creativity.
- 6. Eat and drink sensibly, and get plenty of exercise and sleep.** One of the easiest and most straightforward ways to combat holiday stress is to pay better attention to your body's needs for healthy food, exercise, and sleep during this intense time of year.
- 7. Practice being a peacemaker if family squabbles erupt.** With the stress of holiday expectations, it is easy for people to get their feelings hurt. Two simple keys here are to listen more attentively and let others know that they have been heard.
- 8. Finances.** Like your relationships, your financial situation can cause stress at any time of the year. Overspending during the holidays can increase stress as you try to ensure everyone on your gift list is happy. When you find yourself faced with a spending choice, take a deep breath, relax, and ask yourself, *What choice will truly improve the*



For many the holiday season is filled with laughter, music, joy and peace but for some it is a time of increased stress. If you begin to feel increased tension in your life, please call Operation Care's 24 Hour Helpline before taking this stress out on children, family members, friends and others.

quality of my life and that of others?+

9. Create a new holiday tradition that builds connections among your family and friends.

Annual holiday traditions can be a source of great comfort, satisfaction, and connection between family & friends. Creating a new holiday tradition can be just as satisfying. Keep in mind that the best traditions may be the simplest ones that involve spending time together.

10. Reflect on the deeper meaning and the spirit of the holidays for you personally, for your family, and for humanity and the world. By pausing to reflect on this meaning, you can gain a better perspective on how to organize your holiday priorities. (www.self-guided.com)



Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Support Services
Since 1980

619 New York Ranch Road
Jackson, CA 95642

Phone: 209-223-2897
Fax: 209-223-2987
24-Hour Crisis Line: 209-223-2600
Toll free: 800-675-3392
www.operationcare.org

If you or someone you know needs help, call 911
Or call the 24-hour crisis line: 209.223.2600 or 1.800.675.3392

This project was financially assisted by grants through CBCAP and OES Domestic Violence Program DV11101628.

Helping Children Cope with Holiday Stress



For most children, the holidays are happy, fun and exciting times. There is a break from school, and a chance to see friends and relatives. There may also be special food, music, and family traditions. However, for some, the holidays can also be stressful and confusing.

- ✦ **Establish predictable routines.** Eat regular meals. Make sure that children get enough sleep. Plan for rest times. Take time to explain the day's activities.
- ✦ **Prepare ahead for a hectic day.** Plan for snacks. Take along quick snacks like crackers or veggies that can be shared when shopping lines are long and hunger makes tempers flare.
- ✦ **Set a good example yourself.** Avoid overextending yourself by trying to do too much. Plan quiet times and get away+activities for yourself.
- ✦ **Allow time for children to play.** Find fun things you can do together. Plan frequent activity breaks.
- ✦ **Plan ahead if you are expecting guests.** Let your children share in planning how to make your guests comfortable.
- ✦ **If you are going to be visiting others,** discuss any rules that might be different from home. Let your child help you make plans for bringing or making a gift.
- ✦ **Share humor in difficult situations.** Take a step back and relax+
- ✦ **Express positive appreciation for cooperative behavior.** Provide LOTS AND LOTS OF HUGS!
- ✦ **Develop bedtime rituals:** read a book, play a quiet game, or talk.
- ✦ **Make sure kids get plenty of rest.** While it may be exciting to stay up late, lack of sleep often leads to increased irritability.
- ✦ **Uphold and maintain family traditions even if a parent is absent.** Kids count on certain traditions. They can have an important grounding effect by letting kids know that even though some things have changed, other things have remained the same.
- ✦ **Don't try to compensate for an absent family member with lots of gifts.** What most kids really want is your time and attention.
- ✦ **Don't promise things you can't produce.** For example, don't promise a parent will be home in time for the holidays if the decision is really out of your control.

As the adult, take care of yourself. Try to avoid getting overloaded with obligations. If you feel stressed, it increases the pressure and tension on your children. (www.physc.org)

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