

Holiday Stresses

Sometimes the holidays bring lots of pressures- financial and emotional.

Coping with Stress during the Holidays- For Adults

- **Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable.** Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- **Remember the holiday season does not banish reasons for feeling sad** and lonely; there is room for these feelings to be present, even if a person chooses not to express them.
- **Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future.** Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don't set yourself up in comparing today with the “good ol' days.”
- **Do something for someone else.** Try volunteering some time to help others.
- **Enjoy activities that are free,** such as driving around to look at holiday decorations; going window shopping without buying; making a snowperson with children.
- **Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.**
- **Try something new.** Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- **Spend time with supportive and caring people.** Reach out and make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from for awhile.
- **Save time for yourself!** Recharge your batteries! Let others share responsibility of activities.

Coping with Stress during the Holidays- For Children

- **Discuss holiday plans well in advance, and include your children in the planning process.** Kids need some degree of control and predictability. Changing plans or last minute decisions can increase stress.
- **Make sure kids get plenty of rest.** While it may be exciting to stay up late, lack of sleep often leads to increased irritability.
- **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.
- **Don't try and compensate for an absent family member with lots of gifts.** If children seem upset about an absent parent, encourage them to express their feelings. For example, comfort the child by saying "That must have made you feel let down." What most kids really want is your time and attention. Giving your time and attention is the best way to deal with your child's feelings of disappointment. It is important for children to be around people who will listen carefully to their concerns and give them a sense of worth. You don't need all the right answers. Mostly, children need someone who listens and cares about what they say.
- **Uphold and maintain family traditions.** Kids count on certain traditions. They can have an important grounding effect by letting kids know that even though some things may be different, other things have remained the same.

- **Limit the amount of time kids spend alone watching TV or playing video games.** Encourage physical activity and interaction with peers.
- **Continue to enforce rules and limits.** During times of stress, children need a stable and predictable world. Although some children may misbehave more when under stress, discovering that the rules have not changed comforts them.

