



Holiday Stress

(And How to Cope)





Stress, Depression, and the Holidays



Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Not only does it negatively affect your work performance and job satisfaction, it can lead to an ‘unhappy’ home during the holidays.

Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.





Holiday Triggers



Common Holiday Triggers:

- Relationships (Past and Present)
- Finances (Economic Downturn)
- Physical Demands (Work and Other Stressors)



Relationships



Relationships can cause **turmoil, conflict or stress** at any time, but tensions are often heightened during the holidays. Family misunderstandings and conflicts can intensify — especially if you're thrust together for several days. On the other hand, facing the holidays without a loved one can be tough and leave you feeling lonely and sad.





Finances



With the added expenses of gifts, travel, food and entertainment, the **holidays can put a strain on your budget** — and your peace of mind. Not to mention that overspending now can mean financial worries for months to come.





Physical Demands



Even die-hard holiday enthusiasts may find that the extra shopping and socializing can leave them wiped out. **Being exhausted increases your stress**, creating a vicious cycle. Exercise and sleep- good antidotes for stress and fatigue- may take a back seat to chores and errands. To top it off, burning the wick at both ends makes you more susceptible to colds and other unwelcome guests.





How to Cope



When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.





Tips for Success



Follow these 10 Tips

- Acknowledge your feelings
- Reach out
- Be realistic
- Set aside differences
- Stick to a budget
- Plan ahead
- Learn to say 'No!'
- Stick with your PT schedule
- Take a break
- Seek help





Acknowledge your Feelings



If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, **realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief.** It's OK to take time to be upset or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season. Expectations to do so are unrealistic.



Reach Out



If you feel lonely or isolated, **seek out** community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.



Be Realistic



The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well.

Choose a few to hold on to, and **be open to creating new ones**. In such circumstances, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.



Set aside Differences



Try to **accept family members and friends** as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression too.



Stick to a Budget



Before you go gift and food shopping, **decide how much money** you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity, participate in Adopt-a-Family or the Angel Tree, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.



Plan Ahead



Set aside **specific days** for shopping, preparing meals, visiting friends and other activities. **Plan** your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients and gifts. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.



Learn to say 'No!'



Saying 'Yes' when you should say 'No' can leave you feeling **resentful and overwhelmed**. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say 'No' when your boss asks you to support the mission, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.



Stick to your PT Schedule



Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

Remain vigilant through the holidays with your Physical Training schedule!



Take a Break



Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and reflect. Listen to your favorite music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring your sanity.