

## Managing Holiday Stress

### What is holiday stress?

In Great Britain, the word "holiday" has the same meaning as vacation. Many Americans would find this comparison laughable. For most of us, the holidays come with our own "to-do" lists.



Too often we take holiday stress for granted. What's worse, we often have higher expectations for this season than for any other time of the year. Planning for the holidays can leave us feeling impatient, cranky, and — in some cases — depressed. When the realities of day-to-day life conflict with our efforts to make the holiday season perfect, stress results.

### What are the holiday blues?

For some of us, the holidays can be a depressing time when we get the holiday blues. Feelings of sadness, loneliness, and anger can intensify when contrasted with the joy expected of the holidays.

Factors that can contribute to holiday depression include:

- Associating the holidays with unresolved family issues or a painful childhood.
- Ignoring feelings of sadness, loneliness, or depression in an effort to maintain "holiday cheer."
- Facing the loss of a loved one with whom you have shared the holidays.
- Having unrealistic expectations of family and friends.
- Having an expectation that you "should" feel good.
- Being away from family and friends.
- Feeling isolated from others.
- Reflecting on losses or disappointments over the past year.
- Coping with changes in family obligations, particularly after a recent marriage or divorce.
- Drinking more alcohol, which is often more readily available during the holidays. (Avoid drinking alcohol to ward off negative feelings. Alcohol often will make depression worse.)

### How do I cope with the holiday blues?

- Try something new. Take a vacation with a family member or friend.
- Spend time with people who care about you.
- Volunteer your time to help others. Spending time with those in need can help you feel less isolated.
- If you are religious, take time to reflect on the spiritual significance of the holidays.
- Try to appreciate the good things you have now instead of focusing on the past.
- Stay active. Get out. Go for a walk. Window shop.
- Accept feelings of sadness or loneliness. These feelings might not go away just because it's the holidays.
- Get help if you need it. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help any time of the year.

Source: Cleveland Clinic

## Twelve Days of Family Physical Activity

On the first day of the winter holiday break, my family and I went outside to play in the snow.

On the second day of the winter holiday break, my family and I built an obstacle course in our house.

On the third day of the winter holiday break, my family and I went skating at the local ice rink.

On the fourth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I had a dance off to crazy music.

On the fifth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I went swimming at the community pool.

On the sixth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I played hopscotch in our kitchen.

On the seventh day of the winter holiday break, my family and I learned to rock climb at the gym.

On the eighth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I played "Simon/Simona" says".

On the ninth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I visited a bowling alley.

On the tenth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I played basketball and soccer inside.

On the eleventh day of the winter holiday break, my family and I went to the local gymnastics club.

On the twelfth day of the winter holiday break, my family and I played table tennis for the first time.

Source: ActiveForLife.com