

[IMAGE]

Take Control of Holiday Stress (Before It Takes Control of You)

By Editorial Staff

Yes, the happy holidays are upon us, and as discussed last newsletter, the glorious days of indulgence can lead to weight gain if not managed properly. But the holidays are dangerous to your health and wellness for another reason: stress. Whether it's the end-of-year deadlines at work, the mad rush to get your holiday shopping done (and the financial burden therein), the hectic one-party-after-another schedule or endless other factors, the holidays can increase your stress levels exponentially. Here's how to de-stress the holidays and allow you to enjoy the end of the year (and the beginning of the new one) without blowing a gasket.

Put it on the calendar: As your days become busier and busier, the potential for stress overload increases. How can you manage all your errands and responsibilities? The same way you've (hopefully) done it throughout the year: by putting it on a calendar. The only way to survive the hectic holidays is to make not only a calendar of the entire holiday season and pencil in all important dates and deadlines, but also to create a daily To Do List – and make sure all your "to-do's" get done in an orderly fashion. You'll be amazed how great you feel when you've organized your hectic day onto a single sheet and then cross off one task after the next as you complete them.

holiday stress - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Go to your happy place:* Stress reduction goes way beyond the physical; it becomes an exercise in mental relaxation. This holiday season, continually remind yourself to "go to your happy place" whenever you're faced with a stressful situation. Drowning in a sea of mall shoppers? Find a bench and take a 5-minute break – or go outside and walk for a few minutes, breathing the fresh, crisp air. Can't take another critical conversation with your in-laws? Switch the conversation to something you know will elicit a positive reaction / interaction. Find your happy place amid the chaos and help keep your stress levels low.

Schedule some free time: Back to that calendar / To Do List for a moment. If you're going to take control of holiday stress, you've got to schedule some free time for yourself while you're scheduling everything else. You can tell yourself you're going to do it, but if you don't put it on the calendar, you'll likely end up

skipping it – and suffering the stress consequences. So schedule an end-of-day bath, a 20-minute midday walk or an early-morning read of whatever book you’re working through – or schedule all three! After all, during the holiday season, there’s plenty of stress potential in the air. Balance it with consistent, rewarding free time and give stress the boot.

Feed a little peace of mind: Last issue, we talked about ways to avoid holiday weight gain with sensible eating / lifestyle habits. This advice works just as well when it comes to fighting stress. After all, if you can’t fit into your holiday outfit, you’re riddled with guilt because you’ve gained back all the weight you lost for the previous 11 months, and your stomach’s in knots from that third piece of pie, it’s hard to stop stress from overwhelming you. So while you’re enjoying those holiday indulgences (sensibly and moderately), up your intake of stress-relieving foods such as avocado, salmon, green tea, oatmeal, blueberries, leafy green vegetables and a host of other healthy options.

Holiday stress can ruin what should be an amazing time of year for you, your family and loved ones. Make the holidays memorable by taking control of stress – before it takes control of you. Ask your doctor about these and other [stress-reducing strategies](#) to help brighten your day.

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