

[IMAGE]

## 4 Ways to Keep Your Holidays Sane

By Editorial Staff

As we've discussed several times already this year (and on an annual basis), the holidays bring not only the joy of the season, but unfortunately, their fair share of stress as well. Running through malls, organizing events, wrapping up end-of-year work details, and myriad other activities specific to the holiday season can take their toll on even the most calm, low-stress person.

But it doesn't have to be that way. With the right attention to stress-reducing strategies, you can avoid the madness (or at least mitigate its impact on your quality of life) and keep your holidays sane. Here are four ways to do it:

*1. Two for the Price of One:* When you're crumbling under the weight of an oppressive To-Do List you think you'll never complete, multitasking can be your best friend. It all starts by organizing that list to group responsibilities / to-do's that can be accomplished at the same time or in close proximity. Need to run to the mall for a few gifts, grab some lights for the tree and stop by the in-laws for dinner? Determine the best route to ensure you're not running around town or consuming your entire day. Simple scheduling tactics can help, too: perhaps a holiday lunch can be switched to breakfast if you have other duties to attend to in the morning, so you can take care of everything in the a.m. and have your p.m. to enjoy, stress-free.

holiday shopping - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Stick to the Plan:* Now is definitely not the time to stop exercising and eating right. You may think this is actually the perfect time to take a well-deserved break ... but how will you feel? For most people, routine is a source of comfort and self-confidence, particularly when it involves how they look and feel. So stick to the plan that's worked all year; your body and mind will thank you for it.

*3. Rise and Shine:* No, we're not recommending you wake up early every day during the holiday season, although many people find getting up early and going to sleep at a reasonable hour is preferable to the other way around from a stress perspective. We're actually talking about reducing your stress this time of year by getting things done early. No doubt you've got your fair share of things to do in addition to your "regular" daily responsibilities. One thing's certain: If you leave things until the last minute, you'll increase the

likelihood that you won't get everything done, and you'll undoubtedly elevate your stress levels.

*4. The More the Merrier:* We'll end today's lesson with the one too many people completely overlook, not only during the holiday season, but throughout the year. A top cause of stress is feeling overwhelmed; thinking you have to get too much done all by yourself. But why? Unless you're a hermit, you're not alone, so rely on friends, family and loved ones – the very people whose company you should be enjoying and celebrating this season – to help with the kids, your shopping list, meal preparation, or just giving you an hour or two of peace and quiet. It's a great way to keep stress at bay as the year winds down.

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