

# Managing Holiday Stress

It's the time of the year when life can be a whirlwind of activity and to do lists. Some people thrive on this activity but many feel stressed out by it, possibly diminishing the meaning, joy and the spirit of the holidays. That doesn't have to be the case! It is possible to feel great through the holidays. Here are some tips to help you:

**Respect your feelings:** Holidays can be a mixed bag for many of us, especially if you have lost a loved one. It is ok to feel sad and grieve this loss—you are stronger when you face these feelings.

**Things don't have to be just right:** Remind yourself of the spirit of the holidays are to celebrate...not to complete a checklist of "to dos" or compete with anyone. Set realistic expectations for yourself and the people in your life.

**Prioritize:** Choose the things that must get done and, if possible, let go of the rest. Doing so can help make time to be with your loved ones and other things that give your holiday meaning.

The World Trade Center Health Program provides counseling services to its members. **If you are experiencing a mental health emergency such as persistent thoughts of hurting yourself or others, please call 911 or go to the emergency room.**

**Tips by Priyanka Upadhyaya, Psy.D**  
Clinical psychologist and Clinical instructor at the World Trade Center Environmental Health Center - NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue

**'Tis the season to give:** Not only gifts but time, support, expertise, and kindness. Volunteering or helping those less fortunate truly can embody the spirit of the holidays.

**Enjoy your holiday indulgences, but try to:** Eat healthfully, exercise, and get enough sleep. If you drink, do so in moderation.

**Stick to a routine:** The holidays don't have to tilt the balance. Stick to your schedule and add in a few holiday activities.

**Take some time out:** Enjoy the moments of your life that make you happy—go for a walk, listen to your favorite music, or read a book. Try not to dwell on the past or worry about the future.

**The holidays don't last forever:** If all else fails, just know that you WILL get through this time. You can choose how, when, with whom and where. Remind yourself that it will be over soon.

## Winter blues are real!

Shorter days and longer nights can lead to feelings of sadness or losing interest in life. If you have a case of the "winter blues" seek help. Contact your clinic to meet with someone from the WTC Health Program who can help.

## Managing family ties this holiday season? Below are tips to help:

**Set boundaries:** It's ok to choose which holiday activity you want to participate in.

**Brush it off:** Some people are highly stressed during this time and may make off the cuff remarks. Try not to take things too seriously.

**Have an ally:** Have regular contact with someone who can help you get through the stressful aspects of the holidays.

**Timeout:** Take the proactive step and remove yourself from a conflict situation. Everyone gets a chance to calm down and re-engage at a later time.

**Be aware:** Notice your feelings and use them to act in a proactive and mindful way.

**Deal with conflict:** Look to resolve conflicts, rather than being right or winning the argument. Remind yourself of the spirit of the holidays and focus on gratitude, appreciation and giving thanks instead.