

Managing Stress over the Holidays

By Mary Judge

Stress can be a mental, emotional, or physical strain caused by anxiety or overwork. Sometimes holiday time can be the most stressful because of family commitments, work schedules, children's activities, church commitments, etc. but how can we deal with it in a pleasant manner without ruining this wonderful time of year?

Stress is a natural part of our lives but it doesn't have to be a bad thing if we just take some time for ourselves and slow down. We can't necessarily avoid stress but we can determine HOW we will react to it. Although I'm sure everyone is different, here are just a few ways that you can make things easier to manage this sometimes stressful time of year.

1. You don't have to say "yes" to everything. Pick and choose which events you will go to or just make a brief appearance if you feel you absolutely must attend.
2. Stay healthy – eat properly (don't overeat), drink lots of fluids (avoid excessive alcohol), get plenty of sleep, etc. This list could go on and on...
3. Pick your battles. Don't sweat the small stuff.
4. Be practical. Set realistic expectations. Take time to breathe!
5. Listen to relaxing or holiday music.
6. If you are spiritual, think of the deeper meaning of this time of year.
7. Use lists to stay organized. Delegate where possible. Be flexible with times.
8. Stick to normal routines when possible and shrug off or ignore the criticisms of others.
9. Keep old traditions and start a new one
10. Set a budget and stick to it.

And if all else fails get yourself a Stress Management Kit with the following items:

1. An eraser, so you can make all your mistakes disappear
2. A penny, so you will never have to say "I'm completely broke"
3. A marble, for those days when you are sure you have lost all of yours.
4. An elastic, to help you stretch beyond your limits
5. A string, to tie it all together when it seems to be falling apart
6. A Hershey's Hug & Kiss, to remind you that Someone, Somewhere cares about you.

Happy Holidays everyone!

