

Minimizing Holiday Stress

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SMART
goal-setting
will help
you take
action . . .

The Nature of Stress

Stress can lead to disease if not managed. Stress is very individual. What bothers some people may not bother others. The most stressful times may be during the various holiday seasons.

There are two types of stress:

1. **Eu-Stress** – good stress that helps you stay motivated and meet deadlines.
2. **Distress** – bad stress that causes you to become overwhelmed and tensed.



“When you come to the edge of all the light you have, and must take a step into the darkness of the unknown, believe that one of two things will happen; either there will be something solid for you to stand on, or you will be taught how to fly.”
— Patrick Overton

List some possible holiday stress demands:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Behavior-related trigger points:

- Relationships
- Family misunderstandings and conflicts
- Facing the holidays without a loved one
- Overspending on gifts, travel, food, and entertainment

– continued –

Physical-related trigger points

- Strain of shopping, attending social gatherings, and preparing holiday meals
- Chores and errands
- High demands
- Lack of exercise
- Overindulgence in food and drink

Six questions to ask yourself to prevent holiday stress

1. How do I deal with stress?
2. Do I take care of myself?
3. Do I manage my finances?
4. Do I learn to say no?
5. Do I ask for support?
6. Do I change one behavior at a time?

SMART Goal-setting

To move into and through the holiday season with grace and peacefulness, it is important to have a plan. SMART goal-setting will help you take action that will result in stress prevention or reduction.

S = Specific Choose a specific behavior.

M = Measurable Is the glass half empty or half full? How will you measure your progress toward completing the goal (e.g., time, pounds, money, etc.)?

A = Action-oriented Take action on your goal (e.g., if you have trouble getting up in the morning, set the alarm for an earlier time).

R = Realistic Don't expect to change your behavior overnight. Set a timetable that can be met.

T = Time-sensitive

Give yourself a window of opportunity. Set a deadline. Determine when you will be working on your goal and when it will be accomplished.

SMART goal example: Beginning November 1, I will take at least 15 minutes per day, 5 days a week, to do nothing but sit in silence, and I will continue working on this goal for two months.

Now, it is your time. Take a few minutes to write three SMART goals to help you manage stress during the holiday season.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Resources

Seaward, Luke. *Managing Stress – Principles and Strategies for Health and Well-being*, 3rd Edition

The American Psychological Association
(www.apa.org/)

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