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Harried holidays? How to cut your seasonal stress

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The holiday season can be one of the most stressful times of the year in both our personal and professional lives. The season's expectations may have you racing around town for "that toy" the kids just have to have, gnawing anticipation of parties and social gatherings, and expectations that your own home must be spic and span and decorated to the teeth for all to enjoy. At work, fellow employees are taking vacations and you might be trying to squeeze in some downtime, but the work is still there in abundance. In our environment and during these times, it is particularly important to address seasonal stress. Give some thought to the following tips to help you get a handle on the holidays.

- Be self-aware. Learn to identify the symptoms of stress. These can include headaches, muscle tension, tiredness, irritability, poor concentration and forgetfulness. Denial gets us nowhere. Stress is detrimental to well-being, success, relationships, and joy. Identifying that you are stressed is the first step in de-stressing.
- Don't be a Grinch. There is humor all around us. Set a goal to find some time to laugh. It's also more fun when you laugh with others. Laughter is catchy and healing. And best of all, as a holiday "side benefit," it actually burns calories!
- Think of your work as a gift and service to others. In doing so, you're likely to find more happiness in your tasks.
- Communicate to others the way you would like to be spoken to. Good communication is often the key to reducing stress and managing problems with others. Be clear, respectful, and kind to others, even in the face of adversity. Your experiences are what you make of them.
- Simplify your life by lowering your expectations of yourself and others. Don't expect perfection at home or in the workplace.
- Really, take care of yourself. Don't celebrate with poor choices of unhealthy consumption. This includes excessive alcohol and/or caffeine, overeating, focusing on the negatives, over spending, or isolating yourself.



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Be careful what you consume. It will consume you.

- Breathe. I know it sounds simple, but it works. Take a couple of minutes and breathe in and out deeply- - - and - - - slowly. Create a rhythm by counting as you breathe in and out. You know, we yawn and sigh for a reason! It works! Deep breathing triggers relaxation. Go ahead, if you have never really taken time to try this one, give it a shot.
- Be a battle buddy in your work environment. If you see signs of stress in someone else, whether a co-worker or Soldier, at a minimum, don't contribute to their problems with a cold demeanor, sharp words, or dismissing them. Do something to be a part of what is right with the world. Ask them if they are okay or if they need to talk, offer to help, thank them for something they have done, or bring some positive attention to them. Engage for good, not for bad. Because of our fast-paced lives, simple acts of kindness are often unexpected and can have a tremendous impact on others, as well as having a positive effect on you as well.
- Let peace rule in your heart by forgiving someone and free yourself of the burden you are walking around with at work or home, with family or co-workers.
- Stress can be dangerous. Beside the negative impact stress can have on your health, it can also result in good people making poor and even disastrous choices. Also, take a moment to review your nearest exit, identify a barricade location and method, and make sure you know your area's safety plan. If some of these suggestions are creating more stress and questions for you, talk with your supervisor or EAP.
- For some, the holidays are not a time filled with joy. Staff, visitors, service members and family can suffer from seasonal depression, loss, resentment, regret, chronic pain, and loneliness. For our Soldiers and their Family members, there are many points of contact set up for their well-being and care. Seek help if you need it. Encourage others to seek help. For staff, contact you Employee Assistance Program for guidance.

Here are some helpful links:

[Year 2011 Tips for Dealing with Holiday Stress](#)

[Dealing with Angry and Difficult Customers](#)



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[Manage Stress Right Now](#)

[Verbal De-Escalation Techniques: Defusing or Talking Down an Explosive Situation](#)

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)