



How to Manage the Most Common Holiday Stresses

Holiday stress is common. But that doesn't mean it's out of your control. These six practical strategies will help you dial it down.



1. Just Say "No"



Work parties, school pageants, cookie exchanges... the list of invitations can be overwhelming. Remember that it's OK to prioritize your activities and sometimes say "no." If the days leading up to the holiday are overloaded with obligations, look for opportunities between December 26 and New Year's Day to spend time with family and friends.

2. Stick to a Budget

Set spending limits before you head to the stores. Consider giving gifts made in your kitchen or craft table. Not crafty? Give the gift of time by offering babysitting or pet sitting to someone in need of a low-cost evening out. Explore pooling resources with family members to buy group gifts or drawing names from a hat so each person buys for just one other person.



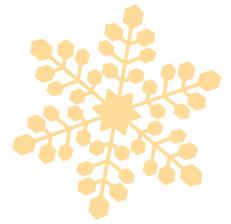
3. Travel Via Technology

If you can't afford to visit out-of-town family or friends, use Skype or Google Hangouts to make free video calls. iPhone users can use the FaceTime app.





4. Avoid Unwanted Conversations



Do you have family members who can turn just about any casual conversation into a full-blown family feud? If so, you're not alone. The best advice: Do NOT "poke the bear." When volatile conversations bubble up, excuse yourself from the table, leave the room or step outside until the conflict simmers down.



5. Don't Be Alone

If circumstances cause you to be by yourself over the holidays when you'd rather be among people, you can connect by volunteering or reaching out to co-workers or neighbors. Looking for local volunteer opportunities? [Chicago Cares](#) is a good place to start.



6. Embrace "Good Enough"

Reality seldom measures up to the avalanche of expectations surrounding the holidays. Aim for a "good enough" holiday by keeping expectations realistic and focusing on what's truly important to you. You just might discover that your "good enough" holiday is the perfect gift you can give yourself.



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