



How to Stay Calm During the Holidays

The holidays can be fun, but they also can be a source of great stress. So often we hope for the holidays to be a warm time of family togetherness and even reconciliation but as we know, this can be a fantasy and our reality may be more challenging.

HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH ONGOING FAMILY PROBLEMS DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

Don't try to solve past issues with family members over the holidays, it may be the hardest time of all for resolving differences, use discretion. And if your annual routines cause you a lot of stress each year, think about switching up your plans and put less pressure on yourself. Maybe you can visit some people this year and others next year instead.

ARE FINANCIAL PRESSURES OF THE HOLIDAYS CAUSING YOU STRESS?

Facing the truth about your spending limit is also a way to relieve holiday stress. We are programmed to go out and buy gifts because it's the holidays, even if we can't afford to do so. Not only is it stressful to feel that you have to buy everyone a gift, but that you will be paying off the bills for the rest of the year. You can show caring and love by giving something meaningful and personal for each person without spending a lot.

HOW CAN WE RELIEVE TIME PRESSURES AROUND THE HOLIDAYS?

Learn to prioritize the invitations that you receive and don't feel that you have to go to every holiday gathering. Plan time away from the festivities – all too often, people are inundated with holiday plans. Make sure to find some time for yourself or with close friends during the holiday season.

HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH SADNESS DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

For some people, the holidays are a reminder of those who they have lost. If you're feeling really out-of-sorts, you may want to give yourself a little extra comfort. Skip some of the festivities if you are feeling out-of-sync with the season. Tell the people who care about you the truth about what you need. They may not know how to help you,

but asking for their understanding may help them understand when you choose quiet time over the parties. You may even choose to do something meaningful that helps you to honor your losses or loved ones. This may help you to validate your feelings, allowing you to better enjoy the good people and things that are available to you.

HOW CAN WE COPE WITH CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY EXPECTATIONS?

Parents need to help their children understand the ups and downs of being realistic. It is OK to tell your child that a certain gift is too expensive. Explain to them that even Santa Claus has limited funds and has to choose what to give – he has a very long list! Assure them that Mom and Dad (and Santa Claus) will try to choose the best presents. Children can learn more during the Holidays about the value of love, time together, and gratitude for what we do have. You can always plan realistic time frames for making other purchases that just can't be done now.

We can overcome some of the commercialism of the holidays by focusing more on the traditions that don't cost money. Bake cookies, go caroling, give simple things to other people in need, or volunteer. Explain to your children that there are a lot of families who don't have as much as they do. Help children get into the spirit of giving. Encourage them to pick a few of their old toys to donate.

WHAT ARE SOME GOOD COPING STRATEGIES?

Take stock of your expectations and make sure they're realistic. Don't expect more of this time of year than is realistic. Take a break from holiday music and television specials if you find that they're turning you into "Scrooge".

Many people dislike the holidays because their inner experience is so different from what is being hyped. You should trust your own instincts and be yourself. Keep up your normal routine and remember that the holidays are brief.

If you are unable to shake what you think are "holiday blues", your feelings may not be about the holiday, but about other things in your life. If you need help in sorting out or dealing with this issue, call the Family Centre at 232-1116 and ask to speak with an intake worker.

Reference: www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-coping.aspx

If you would like more information on this topic you can contact Family Centre and ask to speak with the Community Support Worker at 232-1116.