Coping with Holiday Stress

Dealing with the holidays is rarely easy. While you might love the idea of celebrating a special holiday with your friends and family, it’s easy to become overwhelmed when you’re preparing holiday plans. Many adults find that holidays can be both financially and emotionally draining. If you’re starting to dread the idea of celebrating the holidays, don’t lose heart. There are several things you can do to reduce holiday stress this year. Here’s what you need to know.

Plan “me” time
Planning your holiday can make any event go seamlessly. Staying organized and understanding your menu plan and schedule of events can be incredibly beneficial; however, it’s also important that you make sure to plan some time for yourself. While you might have work and both personal and family responsibilities, enjoying some time by yourself can be a wonderful way to relax and to reduce stress. Remember that self-care doesn’t have to be complicated, time-consuming, or expensive. Something as simple as taking a bubble bath or going on a jog can be quite beneficial and help you to stay calm during this time.

Avoid stressful gatherings
If you have friends, relatives, or colleagues who cause you unnecessary amounts of stress, remember that you can choose to politely turn down invitations to gatherings where those particular people may cause you undue anxiety. There’s nothing wrong with avoiding situations where stress levels can quickly spiral out of control. If you do choose to attend social gatherings and you find that they simply become too much to manage, remember that it’s okay to quietly excuse yourself from the event.

Get enough sleep
One of the most challenging aspects of celebrating holidays is making sure that you’re taking care of your body. This includes things like drinking plenty of water and exercising; however, it also means that you need to get enough sleep. If you aren’t sleeping enough, then the holidays can quickly become quite stressful. An issue as small as not being able to find the perfect gift may become overwhelmingly devastating if you aren’t sleeping enough. No matter what type of holiday you’re preparing to celebrate, it’s important to take the time to care for yourself. Make sure you pay attention to your body and understand your stress levels. If something begins to spiral out of control, stop what you’re doing or planning and consider alternative options for reducing your stress in order to truly enjoy the holiday.
Stress Management Made Easy

Everyone feels stressed sometimes. Whether you have your own business, you’re balancing your personal life and your career, or you’re dealing with educational-related anxiety, it’s important to learn how to identify and manage stress when it occurs. Learning to manage stress is something that anyone can do. Regardless of your personal situation, understanding and conquering your stress can help you to move forward with your life. While it’s not always possible to completely avoid stress, it is possible to learn how to cope with it effectively.

First off, make sure you focus on the things you can manage. Many adults feel stress or anxiety when they think about things that are out of their control. You can’t control how your boss or your teachers treat you, for example, but you can control your reaction to both them and the situation. You may not be able to control the way people speak about you behind your back, but you have full control of your reaction to those situations. By focusing on what you can change, you’ll slowly start to let the other things go.

It’s also important to reduce stressful situations and relationships when possible. Do you have a friend who causes you incredible anxiety? Do you have a toxic relative who always talks down to you? Are you involved with a club or group that is poorly managed and overly dramatic? Take an honest look at your life and the situations you’re in. Chances are that there are some toxic or unhealthy situations you can remove yourself from in order to minimize your personal stress.

Finally, make sure you take time to relax. Everyone works hard. Most of the time, hard work is incredibly important. It enables you to pay your bills, enjoy a successful career, and maybe even have extra spending money for some fun. It’s important that you don’t just work, though. Make sure you’re taking time to relax and enjoy yourself. Spend some time each day on self-care. This could mean relaxing with a book, or spending time listening to music.

No matter what your life looks like, it’s possible to reduce your stress and anxiety in healthy ways. Just remember to take things one step at a time.

Getting active: Five steps you can take today

Regardless of how busy you are, staying active is vital to your health. Physically moving your body can help you control your weight, keep your heart healthy, and maintain normal blood pressure levels. These five steps are easy-to-implement regardless of your current fitness levels and lifestyle.

1. **Go on a walk.** Doctors agree that walking for even just 30 minutes each day can help increase your overall health. If you’re looking for ways to become more active, but you’re on a budget, walking is a free way you can exercise. Not only will walking help improve your heart rate, but it can also help tone and slim your body, as well. Consider going on a walk with a friend for half of an hour or even just taking several short, brisk strolls throughout the day.

2. **Put on some music.** If you enjoy listening to music, why not put some on? Dancing around your house can be a fantastic way to stay active and in charge of your body. Put on a few of your favourite songs and let the music move you. If you want to mix it up, try doing sit-ups, push-ups, or even leg lifts while listening to music.

3. **Try a new activity.** Is there an activity you’ve been wanting to try? Why not get started? Exploring a new hobby can be an effective way to start moving and staying active. You can try jogging, riding bikes, or even roller-skating. If you live in an area with lots of nature, consider hiking.

4. **Sign up for a class.** If you live in a city, you may be able to take fitness classes at a local gym. Consider signing up for a fitness class that’s perfectly suited to your needs. Sometimes committing to a class is an effective way to make sure you’re actually working out on a regular basis and that you’re staying as active as you want to.

5. **Look for ways to move.** One of the simplest steps you can take when you’re ready to get active is to start looking for opportunities to move your body. Walk a few laps around your neighbourhood after work. Walk around the mall when it’s raining.
Nutrition Made Easy: 3 Steps to Improve Your Diet

One of the most important steps any adult can take is to start learning how to eat healthy, well-rounded meals. Striving to have good nutrition is incredibly important when it comes to staying healthy, fit, and in control of your life. No matter what your current diet looks like, there are several things you can do to start incorporating better nutrition into your lifestyle.

Track what you’re eating

First, make sure you track how you’re eating. You may not need to restrict your calories, but it’s a good idea to make sure you understand exactly how much you’re eating each day, as well as what types of foods you’re eating. When you’re busy or pre-occupied with work or school, it’s easy to eat more junk food than you anticipated consuming. Tracking your food lets you carefully explore and understand exactly how much food you’re eating, as well as what types of food you’re consuming.

Focus on eating non-processed foods

One of the simplest ways you can start enjoying better nutrition in your diet is to stop eating processed foods. Foods that are pre-made and pre-packaged typically have larger amounts of both sugar and sodium than their non-processed counterparts. For example, instead of buying a fruit smoothie that’s been pre-made at the store, you can make your own fruit smoothie at home using only natural fruit. Additionally, cooking at home in general is a fantastic way to eat more whole and natural foods that may have more fiber and less sugar than the foods you might get at a fast-food restaurant.

Look for ways to add fruit and vegetables

Have you been actively looking for ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into your diet? Most adults don’t consume enough fruits and vegetables on a regular basis. Fruit and vegetables can help you maintain a healthy weight; however, they are also full of fiber and vitamins that can help you to stay healthy and strong. Consider adding fruit to your yogurt when you eat breakfast or adding a banana to your packed lunch. Improving your nutrition doesn’t have to be overwhelming. In fact, with a few simple lifestyle changes, you’ll find that it can actually be quite simple.
It's not easy to see someone you care about have depression. So much is misunderstood about this illness, especially how it affects caregivers. Psychology Today offers a few tips about how to cope when a loved one has depression:

**Depression doesn’t define your loved one.**
Depression can mute personality. However, the change isn’t permanent. Think of depression like turning the volume dial down on a speaker. It’s still playing the same music, but at a diminished level. People recover from depression every day and regain their energy, motivation and most importantly, their personality. That person you once knew is still there.

**Have patience.**
Depending on what type of depression your loved one has, recovery will take a great deal of time. Bear in mind that recovery entails trial and error. Your loved one may try to overcome the depression and fail several times, because depression compromises the motivation for healing.

Without motivation for change, depression takes a long time to heal. Allow time for treatment to work.

**Adjust your expectations.**
Recognize that your loved one may not have the same goals, ambitions, drives, and passions that they had before the depression. You won’t be able to depend on them like you once did. The support, love, and affection you received from them won’t be as readily available as it once was. Depression makes people forgetful, absentminded, and lethargic. If you send them out shopping, they may come back without some of the items you requested. This is not their fault. Don’t hold it against them.

**Don’t give up hope.**
The worst thing you can do is lose hope. Your loved one needs you now more than ever. They may be hopeless, but they can lean on your hope and belief. Recovery from depression is possible; people do it every day. It takes a lot of hard work, patience, trial and error, treatment, and support, but it’s possible. The way of recovery may seem unclear, but trust the process.

**You are not enough.**
Your loved one’s recovery shouldn’t rest entirely on your shoulders. Seek out support structures for your loved one so that you aren’t the only lifeline. Don’t forget about your need for support as you support your depressed loved one.

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Anyone who has had to suffer through shingles will tell you that it is one of the most painful rashes you will ever have. Although this viral infection can occur anywhere on your body, it most often appears as a single stripe of blisters that wraps around either around the left or the right side of your torso.

After you’ve had chickenpox, the virus lies inactive in nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain. Years later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. The reason for shingles is unclear. But it may be due to lowered immunity to infections as you grow older. Shingles is more common in older adults and in people who have weakened immune systems.

Here are two symptoms of shingles that may mask themselves as other problems:

**Sensitivity to light**
A sudden sensitivity to bright light, whether sunshine or fluorescent lighting, can be a subtle sign that something is amiss. According to Larisa Geskin, MD, an associate professor of dermatology at Columbia University Medical Center in New York, shingles may mimic the feeling of a mild migraine coming on.

**Pain around one eye**
If you get migraines, you may be inclined to dismiss this as yet another headache. But don’t ignore this nuance because it could be one of the symptoms of shingles. If you develop pain and tingling in the eye area along with any type of rash, see your doctor.

An effective way to combat shingles is to get vaccinated. There are two approved vaccinations in Canada. Talk with your healthcare provider about your options and if vaccination is right for you.

For more information, visit healthcanada.ca
Solutions to feeling unhappy at work

Five days out of seven you are usually at your place of work. Think about that. Forty hours out of your week. You probably spend more time discussing day-to-day life with your co-workers than you do with your spouse or family members. So, here’s hoping you enjoy your job.

But what if you don’t? What if you find that you have nothing in common with your co-workers? What if you discover that your work is, well, boring?

While these all may seem like valid reasons to “hate” your job, the fact is that they are only the surface cause of your unhappiness. If you dig a little deeper, perhaps there are underlying fixable reasons why you are unhappy at work.

Here are two of the most common complaints and possible solutions:

“I hate my co-workers”. The problem might not be the people but rather the culture of the organization, especially if your company has a long history and there is not a lot of employee turnover. This leads to the, “This is the way we have always done it,” response, which might make you feel ganged up on or left out, or maybe you find yourself constantly arguing to prove your way is the better way.

Solution: Often times workplaces are slow to change, but that doesn’t mean they are not receptive to it. Don’t try to change processes and systems overnight. Take it one step at a time, and be happy with the smaller successes. Remember the old adage; pick your battles, and recognize that some simply will not be won.

Also, realize that work friends often only last as long as they are at that job. Focus instead on strengthening your friendships outside of the office.

“I feel trapped in this job”. Perhaps the real reason for feeling this way is that you are bored and unchallenged by your job, yet quitting is not an option.

Solution: Find inspiration in places outside of work. To motivate yourself, find a mentor or go to a career-related conference that will remind you of why you chose your profession in the first place. Or become a mentor yourself. Sometimes motivating someone else can have the benefit of motivating you as well.

To solve the “trapped” feeling on the job, ask yourself when was the last time you took on an assignment that truly scared you. If it’s been a while, have a conversation with your supervisor about taking on extra responsibility. Trying something new at work can be equally liberating.

Remember that you also hold the key to job satisfaction. You can make your job as interesting or as challenging as you like. Sometimes all it takes is a conversation with your supervisor to re-evaluate your goals as well as his or her expectations of you.

We hear it or read it so many times in a day: Eat in moderation. Drink in moderation. But what exactly does “in moderation” mean? How much is too much, or in some cases not enough?

According to many nutritionists, eating is not an exact science. “It is frustrating for us as nutritionists because people want black and white answers,” says nutritionist Judy Fraser Arsenault of Dalhousie University in Halifax. “But often we are operating in a grey area.”

The general principles of good eating are fairly simple as Canada’s Food Guide will tell you. Eat more fruits and vegetables and more whole-grain products. Be careful about saturated fat, reduce the percentage of animal foods in your diet and eat some fish.

And while most dietitians are urging people to add one particularly beneficial element - soy foods - to their diet, few are promoting outright vegetarianism. We do not have to give up dairy products or meat, according to Joe Schwarcz, a McGill University chemist and nutrition specialist. But it does mean forgetting about “a 16-oz. steak hanging off the plate.” The new rule of thumb: a serving of meat should be no larger than a deck of playing cards.

But it is OK now to eat potato chips. Or a chocolate bar. Or a hotdog. A few potato chips or a bit of chocolate is not going to ruin your system, according to the Heart Foundation. Nor will a bit of tofu act as a “magic bullet” and transform anyone’s health. Nutritionists agree that there is no perfect food - it’s the whole picture that counts.

But no diet comes with a guarantee. Genetics, exercise, stress, environment and just plain luck all play a role in good health.
Weighted blankets explained

Weighted blankets, viewed as a fad just a few years ago, are getting more and more popular.

The concept behind weighted blankets is that they provide deep pressure stimulation that feels like a firm hug, massage or swaddling.

Occupational therapists who work with hyperactive children and adults who are in an agitated state sometimes employ deep pressure touch (DPT) as a therapeutic method to achieve calmer behaviour, however, scientific research is still sparse as to whether a weighted blanket simulates the therapy.

What can be said is that, for some, the blankets can offer a calming effect much like meditating, or taking a warm bath.

If you choose to relax using a weighted blanket, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

**Weighted blankets shouldn’t be used with infants and toddlers.** They can pose safety risks for very young children, such as a choking risk, especially if using it on a child with ADHD or an impulsive child.

**Make sure you get the right weight.**

The rule of thumb is 10% of your bodyweight plus a half kilo to a kilo.

If you want to use the blanket for therapeutic purposes, talk with your health care or mental health care professional first. They can help you understand how to use it properly and evaluate its effectiveness over time.

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Superfoods going strong

2019 saw the rise and fall of food trends but some superfoods are going strong and will likely trend right in to 2020. Here are two of the best according to foodbev.com:

**Fermented foods**

From kefir yogurt to kimchi, and miso to kombucha, the probiotic qualities of fermented foods have brought with them further benefits such as enzymes, B vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids.

As the process of fermentation is natural, it is becoming a desired method of meeting consumer expectations for ‘clean label’ ingredients.

During the fermentation process, good bacteria grow which helps to strengthen digestive health, and promote heart health.

**Super seeds**

Seeds are extremely nutritious, and in recent years, we’ve seen the likes of flaxseeds and chia become popularised. Their popularity grew as they contain a plethora of vitamins, minerals and healthy fats and are good fibre sources.

A new major contender continues to trend on the superfood seed scene: watermelon seeds. Watermelon seeds are both high in nutrients and low in calories making them an attractive snacking option. They are rich in protein and full of magnesium, iron, potassium and folic acid.

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Enjoying the aromas of essential oils

When it comes to wellness and feeling better about yourself, it seems like the whole world is trying to cash in on providing the best products to get you in - dare we say it? - the wellness zone.

Of course the best way to promote wellness in your life is through diet, exercise and eliminating stress. How you choose to eliminate stress is up to you, and some of the products flooding the market today are trying to tell you that their method is the “best method”. But in the end, whatever you choose for yourself, if you use it properly, is your decision.

One of the more popular products in wellness culture is the use of essential oils.

Manufacturers use essential oils to create a range of products. The cosmetic and makeup industry use essential oils to create perfumes, add fragrance to creams and body washes, and even as sources of natural antioxidants in some beauty care products.

Many natural medicine practitioners, such as aromatherapists, use essential oils. Aromatherapy involves diffusing these essential oils into the air. Aromatherapists believe that breathing in essential oils might allow them to enter the lungs and bloodstream, where some of the potentially helpful compounds may benefit the body.

Fact is, anyone who has used a mentholated vapour rub to help clear their sinuses has used a form of aromatherapy. As the authors of a 2013 study Trusted Source note, inhaling menthol in this way can reduce feelings of congestion and shortness of breath.

If you choose to use essential, use them properly:

- Never apply essential oils directly to the skin without diluting them, unless under the direct guidance of a healthcare professional.
- Do not swallow essential oils. Not only are essential oils extremely concentrated, but they can also irritate the sensitive cells inside the body.