

Jasper Health Newsletter

December 2015

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

Many people struggle with stress and emotional rollercoasters during the holidays. When feeling overwhelmed, step back and regroup. Here are some tips from the Mayo Clinic on dealing with holiday pressure.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's okay to feel sadness and grief. It's good to take time to cry or express your feelings, and realize it is unrealistic to not allow yourself to deal with your emotions.
2. **Reach out.** If you feel sad or alone, seek out community, religious or other social events. There are lots of ways to get involved this time of year. Volunteering can also be a wonderful way to uplift your spirits.
3. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or exactly like previous years. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to evolving new ones.
4. **Make peace.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside disagreements until a more appropriate time for discussion. Try to be understanding if others get upset or distressed when things do not go as planned. You may not be the only one stressed about the holidays.
5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, determine how much money you can afford to spend – and stick to your budget! If your budget is tight, try some alternative choices like donating to charity in someone's name, make some homemade gifts, or start a family gift exchange.
6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list, which will prevent last minute overspending, too.
7. **Learn to say no.** Feeling overwhelmed when overcommitted can lead to feelings of resentment and anger. Realizing (and admitting) we cannot “do it all” can free up some pent up anxiety about this time of the year.
8. **Don't forsake healthy habits.** Letting the holidays become a free-for-all will only add to your feelings of stress and guilt. Try having a healthy snack before parties, get

adequate sleep, and fit in a regular workout daily to diminish chances of overindulgence.

9. **Take a break.** Make yourself a priority! Spending just 15 minutes alone, without disruptions, may invigorate you enough to handle all you need to do. Find what makes you happy and destressed. Options may be listening to music, meditation or prayer, reading, journaling, or even getting a massage😊.
10. **Seek professional help if necessary.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Don't dread the holidays. With some planning and positive thinking, you can find joy and peace during this season!!

Resources:

www.mayoclinic.org

www.helpguide.org

www.heart.org