

Cheat Sheet on How to De-stress During the Holidays



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Is Stress Causing You to Dread the Season?

Here are 7 **surefire** strategies for managing and reducing your stress during the holiday season or any time.

1. **Stay hydrated.** You should be drinking enough water to replenish the fluids that evaporate while you are in heated environments or are depleted through exercise. A general rule of thumb for adults is to consume 64 oz. of water (or green or black tea daily but not soda or juice) for good health and increased efficiency of your system.
2. **Eat for good nutrition.** Even though many of us resign ourselves to gaining a few pounds each holiday season because of the parties and pastries that abound all around, you shouldn't forget to eat for good health. Your organs and tissues still need minerals and nutrients that only come from fruits and vegetables, and eating well can help you manage the calories you take in when you are eating at a party.
3. **Exercise at least 5 days a week.** You don't have to be a triathlete, but go for a good brisk walk for 30 minutes a day 5 days a week. Additionally, 2 or three days a week, engage in a few minutes of weight training to help minimize the loss of muscle tone that occurs naturally as you age.
4. **Sleep for 6 ½ to 8 hours each night.** You may have a million things to do between now and Christmas, but you will do them better and with a greater sense of joy if you are doing them after a full night's rest. Your body replenishes itself of necessary hormones in the evenings. You need to sleep in order to aid that natural process. We often mistakenly believe that we can delay or defer sleep. We do so at our own peril. There is a reason why we need our sleep, and we should heed our natural body clock, getting the sleep we need.
5. **Don't forget to breathe!** The more stressed we are, the more shallowly we breathe, and our cells and organs become oxygen deprived. It is a good idea to just stop several times a day and remind yourself to breathe deeply...all the way into your diaphragm. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth slowly 5 to 10 times at least 3 or 4 times a day.
6. **Create a practice of daily prayer or meditation.** Increasingly we are learning that meditation can play an important role in helping us become more centered and grounded. Just 20 minutes a day can do the trick. If that sounds daunting, try 5 minutes of just being still. BE as opposed to DOING for a few minutes a day. It *will* make a difference.
7. **Don't forget to have FUN!** Unfortunately, the holidays have become the symbol for how much we can eat, drink, party, and spend instead of how much we can give, show appreciation and gratitude for all that we already have while we spend time with our loved ones. Take a moment to consider the real purpose of this holiday and stop being so hard on yourself. Take time for **YOU**. Everything will get done. It always does. And whatever doesn't get done may make for a great family story or tradition for the years ahead. Don't forget to have a sense of humor. This is a season for joy and love...take time to enjoy it.