

Here are some ideas:

### Preparing for the holidays

- **Know your spending limit.** Lack of money is one of the biggest [causes of stress](#) during the holiday season. This year, set a budget, and don't spend more than you've planned. It's okay to tell your child that a certain toy costs too much. Don't buy gifts that you'll spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- **Give something personal.** You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal. It doesn't have to cost a lot. Or use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
- **Get organized.** Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks to do and events to attend.
- **Share the tasks.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Share your "to do" list with others. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing the holiday meal.
- **Learn to say no.** It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. This will give you more time to say "yes" to events that you do want to attend.
- **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you. And remember that just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away. If you have a hard time being around your relatives, it's okay to set limits on your time at events and visits.

### During the holidays

You may not be able to avoid stressful situations during the holidays. But you can plan to respond to them in a healthy way.

- **Take breaks from group activities.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Spend a little time by yourself if you can. Meditate, or do some relaxation breathing. Go for a short walk.
- **Keep a regular [sleep](#), meal, and [exercise](#) schedule. Limit your alcohol.** Taking care of yourself will help you deal with stressful situations during the holidays.
- **Get support if you need it.** Holidays can sometimes trigger [depression](#). They can be especially hard if you are already dealing with the death of a loved one or the breakup of a relationship. You may feel embarrassed to ask for help, or you may think that you'll get over "the blues" on your own. But most people need treatment to get better. Talk with your doctor about counseling and medicine for [depression](#).

## Ways to relax your mind

- **Write.** It may help to write about things that are bothering you. Write for 10 to 15 minutes a day about stressful events and how they made you feel. Or think about [tracking your stress](#). This helps you find out what is causing your stress and how much stress you feel. After you know, you can find better ways to cope.
- **Let your feelings out.** Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to. Talking with friends, family, a counselor, or a member of the clergy about your feelings is a healthy way to relieve stress.
- **Do something you enjoy.** You may feel that you're too busy to do these things. But making time to do something you enjoy can help you relax. It might also help you get more done in other areas of your life. Try:
  - A hobby, such as gardening.
  - A creative activity, such as writing, crafts, or art.
  - Playing with and caring for pets.
  - Volunteer work.
- **Focus on the present.** [Meditation](#) and guided imagery are two ways to focus and relax your mind.
  - **Meditate.** When you meditate, you focus your attention on things that are happening right now. Paying attention to your breathing is one way to focus. [Mindfulness-based stress reduction](#) is one form of meditation that is very helpful with [managing stress](#) and learning how to better cope with it.

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<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/tc/quick-tips-reducing-holiday-stress-get-started>

WebMD Medical Reference from Healthwise

Last Updated: November 14, 2014

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