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Andrews University

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STORIES OF HOPE ■ HEALTH TIPS ■ RECIPES ■ UPCOMING EVENTS ■ LINKS



Happy Holidays

Stress Anxiety and Depression During the Holidays

Religious and cultural holidays lead most people to think of family, festivities, and fun. However, the holiday season presents many emotional, psychological, and physical challenges for which people are often unprepared.

Stress

Family Decisions & Flexibility

Although holidays are supposed to be an exciting time of celebration and renewal, the truth is that the holiday season contains many sources of stress.

Decisions have to be made as to when, how, and with whom various holidays will be observed.

For families who have lost a central, organizing family member, making these types of decisions or changing traditions can be very stressful. "My sisters and I had no idea what to do about Christmas after our mother passed away last summer," said one fifty-five year old woman. "In the past, we could all get along for one day at our mother's house, but this year, we could not agree on who should host the gathering, how to divide up the food and chores, or what to do about the gift exchange." "Finally," she said, "after a lot of tears and phone calls, we decided that the oldest living sister should be the hostess. We just hope that our children and grandchildren will go along with the new plan."

Other families who struggle with decisions during the holiday season are separated, divorced, or two-household families. Unless an agreement has been put in place by the courts specifying as many details as possible, parents can argue bitterly over exactly who will celebrate which holiday with their children.

If both parents and their extended families live in the same area, children are often expected to somehow divide their holiday observances, sometimes celebrating the same holiday with as many as four different groups of relations.

Flexibility is the key for two-household families to have a peaceful holiday time.

Demands vs. Resources

Stress is defined as occurring when demands exceed resources. Thus, stress is an individual experience, based on the specific demands being placed on a person and offset by the various resources that the person can bring to bear to meet the demands. Most adults already feel stretched to the limit of their resources just by the demands of daily life in today's fast-paced society. Holiday preparations create a new set of demands that can make many people feel overwhelmed.

Coping With Holiday Stress

Important factors in reducing this type of holiday stress include organization, advance planning, delegation of responsibilities, and simplification. Remember, holidays are not fun for the family if one family member is stressed, irritable, and exhausted from trying to make everything perfect for everyone else. Start working on holiday tasks several weeks earlier than you did last year, make and keep checklists in a central location, simplify holiday meals and desserts, and ask for help with other holiday chores so that everyone not only contributes to the special day, but is relaxed enough to enjoy it, too!

Anxiety

Expectations for holidays can run very high, and can trigger a lot of worries and fears. Anxiety lives in the thoughts of “what if . . .?” What if this or that doesn’t turn out right? What if someone doesn’t like their gift? What if everything isn’t ready on time? Holiday celebrations almost always involve large gatherings of people, as part of religious ceremonies, and as part of celebrations at the workplace or in people’s homes. Often times, people who have not seen each other in a year are spending time together and sharing space. All of this togetherness can be anxiety-provoking, particularly for those who suffer from social phobia, or for those who wish to avoid any type of conflict or disagreement.

Although the goals of most holidays are family and community bonding, and spiritual renewal, the main result of the holiday season for many people is tension and worry. If you find yourself struggling with frequent worries, feelings, of dread, loss of sleep, increased irritability or emotional outbursts, problems with appetite, or increased physical aches and pains, seek and evaluation from a health care provider. An objective professional can help assess the degree to which anxiety is affecting your life, and help you make a plan for appropriate interventions.



*In his own way, **Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer** struggled with feelings of depression and sadness during the Christmas season. He was unable to meet the high expectations set by his family and sought to escape, but then discovered a way to contribute by just being himself.*

Depression

Holidays are supposed to be a happy time, right? But many people feel particularly sad and blue before, during, and after the holiday season. Family members and friends may not be very sensitive to someone who is experiencing depression during the holiday season, due to the cultural expectation that everyone should be joyful at certain times of year.

Grief & Loss

One reason why depression can appear or increase during holidays is due to feelings of grief and loss. Holidays are a time when people want to be with loved ones.

Togetherness can trigger feelings of mourning for those who are not present, whether their absence is due to death, illness, or physical separation such as military duty overseas. Many people feel intense loneliness or abandonment as the holidays fill them with thoughts of absent loved ones.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Seasonal affective disorder is a second factor contributing to an upsurge in depression during the holiday season. SAD is a specific variant of the brain-based, chemical imbalances associated with clinical depression.

SAD usually occurs between November and March, especially in northern locations, when lower daily levels of sunlight affect the pineal gland in the brain. If you are experiencing increased feelings of sadness, a pessimistic outlook on the future, increases in crying, fatigue, irritability, low self-esteem, sleep disturbance, or changes in appetite or weight, make an appointment with your health care provider at the earliest opportunity. As with anxiety, an objective professional assessment can help you choose among a variety of safe and effective interventions for any level of depression.



Jocelyn R. Miller, PhD
Dean Psychologist for
Dean Health Systems



Health Tips



How to save money during the holidays and beyond

With the holidays approaching more and more, do you feel that your budget is a little tight? You use up all your savings in December to begin to set money aside at the beginning of the new year? Want to know how to clean your finances? Look no further. The following tips will help you save money during the month of December and throughout the new year. There are a thousand and one ways to save money during the holiday season. Here are some ideas that will give you a boost.

Shop early.

A good way to avoid panic is to start your shopping as soon as possible. There are fewer people in the stores, you come to think normally, and you can even get good prices.

Use your credit wisely.

If you tend to let you go with credit cards, consider using your debit card. The money then comes directly from your bank account, forcing you to spend only what you can afford.

The clothes make the man.

If you wear uncomfortable clothes - new shoes, too high heels, a dress or a coat with a coat too warm - you may arrive at great expense to get it over with quickly. This applies even if you're hungry, if you're tired or if you are angry.

Shop online

You may find lower prices by shopping online, but be sure to start early: the delivery notes can sometimes get lost if your order is placed too close to Christmas.

Make a list and check it often.

Make a list of people you plan to make a gift and specify the amount you want to spend on each. Or make a list of cheap presents you thinking of buying for everyone and the corresponding amount. In doing so, you put all chances on your side to meet your budget and avoid falling into the trap of impulse purchases.

Avoid peak hours.

Try to avoid going into stores and malls in the busiest hours - weekends, every day from mid-December, Christmas Eve. During these periods, it may be tempting to quickly spend money without thinking too much to escape the crowd as quickly as possible.

Be charitable.

Why not replace shopping parties for donations to charity on behalf of a family member or friend? And ask them to do so on your behalf. You will do two things at once: a gift to your favorite charity and a reduction of your tax bill next spring.

Make your gifts yourself.

If you have a special talent - to cook pastries, jams or preserves or for making handicrafts or knit - why not consider to customize your gift? You'll save money and your parents and friends will appreciate the personal touch.



Caramelized Tofu Recipe

7 - 8 ounces extra-firm tofu cut into thin 1-inch segments (see photo)
a couple pinches of fine-grain sea salt
a couple splashes of olive or peanut oil
2 medium cloves garlic, minced
1/3 cup pecans, toasted and chopped
3 tablespoons fine-grain natural cane sugar or brown sugar
1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
1/2 lb. brussels sprouts, washed and cut into 1/8-inch wide ribbons

Cook the tofu strips in large hot skillet (or pot) with a bit of salt and a splash of oil. Saute until slightly golden, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and pecans, and cook for another minute. Stir in sugar. Cook for another couple of minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro. Scrape the tofu out onto a plate and set aside while you cook the brussels sprouts.

In the same pan (no need to wash), add a touch more oil, another pinch of salt, and dial the heat up to medium-high. When the pan is nice and hot stir in the shredded brussels sprouts. Cook for 2 - 3 minutes, stirring a couple times (but not too often) until you get some golden bits, and the rest of the sprouts are bright and delicious.

Serves 2 - 3 as a main, 4 as a side

Upcoming Events

5 Wishes
November 16th
Monday
7:00pm
Chan Shun Room 108

