

SUCCESS WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

By Stephen I. Sideroff, Ph.D.

If "Tis the season to be jolly" is not always the way you feel during the holiday season, you are not alone. For many of us, the holidays bring with them the holiday blues, or just plain stress. Many factors conspire to create stress: memories, unrealistic expectations, too many gifts to buy in too short a time, crowded stores, family conflicts, financial worries, fears or sadness about being alone. Even the weather — rainy, cloudy, cold days that turn dark too early — can literally put a damper on your life.

Fortunately, you don't have to be a victim of the season. With some planning, as well as shifts in your thinking patterns, you can get rid of the blues and overcome stress and tension. You can turn this time of year into a more pleasant and happy occasion. Below are ten tips to take stress out of the holidays.

1. TAKE CONTROL AND AVOID BEING OVERWHELMED. One of the worst kinds of stress is when you don't feel in control. To avoid this, plan ahead and be realistic with your time. Make your list of gifts and other holiday chores that need to get done. Then attack the list early — what can you get done this week; today? If you have too much to do, can you get help from someone? If not, consider shortening your list. The more realistic you are with your expectations of yourself, the less stress you will experience.

2. KEEP A BALANCE. Make sure you include enjoyable activities in each day, not just your holiday obligations. Reward yourself when you have accomplished goals, even small ones. Consider seeing a comedy or listening to music. Whatever feels good to you, do it!

3. VISUALIZE YOUR DAY. Go through your day first in your mind's eye. You can discover obstacles before they occur, plan ways around them and clear paths toward greater success. An early preview of the day gives you the opportunity to insert rewards and enjoyable activities.

4. TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS. Experience the holidays as a time of renewal. Try to let go of old issues; be generous in your forgiveness. Then let yourself feel good about your expansiveness.

5. MAKE SURE IT IS YOUR AGENDA. The holidays are often filled with perceived obligations. Make conscious decisions about those obligations. Make sure they are your choices, not someone else's. Could you send fewer holiday cards, visit relatives on a different day, or agree with friends to go out to dinner instead of exchanging gifts?

6. CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE. Perspective is the way you look at a situation; perspective determines which part you make important — and are aware of — and which part becomes insignificant, small or superfluous. If the main thing we focus on is pleasant, then we will probably feel good. On the other hand, if we focus on what is negative in the situation, we will more likely feel annoyed and upset. Your perspective determines, to a great extent, how you will feel in a situation — happy or sad, good or bad, and how much stress you will experience. A simple technique is to shrink the negative component of your thoughts or your day, and expand the positive aspects.

7. CLEAN UP UNFINISHED BUSINESS. Don't let unfinished business pile up and cause stress. If the task seems too big or difficult, break it down into smaller components and tackle one part at a time.

8. MAKE PLANS TO BE WITH PEOPLE. The holiday season accentuates the discomfort of being alone. Don't wait until the last minute to call friends or make plans. Take the initiative to find those in similar circumstances, people that you know or would like to know better, get tickets for a show, or plan some other activities.

9. STAY IN THE PRESENT. Holiday responsibilities can be stressful. We often increase stress by worrying about things before they happen and feel guilty later for not doing enough. Keep your stress in check by staying in the present. Don't spend time fretting over what might have been or what may happen tomorrow.

10. SMILE EACH DAY. A smile is unique. This may be the most difficult thing for some of you to do. You say you need a reason to smile? Smile, and then think of a good reason to be smiling. People are
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FOUR STEPS TO ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAYS

By Judy Dalton, Director of Food Services Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center

Most of us spend the holidays eating in abundance. Unfortunately, these days of feasting are followed by the dread of the New Year's diet.

Is it possible to enjoy the bounty of Thanksgiving and the special treats of Christmas or Hannukkah without putting on unwanted pounds? It is possible, and really not too difficult, if a few simple weight-control principles are followed DAILY all year.

1. MINIMIZE DESSERTS AND SUGARS. There are a few sweets that each of us really loves. Why not save our calories for the very best ones and for special occasions and avoid the so-so desserts. Most are "empty calories" anyway, providing calories, but very few vitamins and minerals and little protein.

2. KEEP FAT TO A MINIMUM. Fat is more than twice as high in calories as other nutrients. So, fat of all kinds needs to be used very sparingly. The best ways to reduce fat include: use less butter, margarine, and mayonnaise on breads or sandwiches; try a small amount of no-sugar-added

fruit spread, or mustard for sandwiches; trim the skin from poultry before cooking, or if dining out, before eating; trim all the visible fat from beef, lamb or veal before preparing or eating; try substituting non-fat yogurt or low-fat cottage cheese in a baked potato instead of butter or sour cream.

3. INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN YOUR DIET. Filling up on fresh foods helps eliminate hunger without adding too many calories. Fruits and vegetables are also rich in vitamins and minerals.

4. INCREASE YOUR EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. Exercise such as walking is a very important aspect of weight control. Not only does exercise help you burn calories, but the body continues burning calories at a higher rate long after the exercise period is over.

Senior Suppers. Discounted meals are available daily, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., to ElderMed members in the hospital cafeteria.

GIVE AND RECEIVE AT THE SAME TIME

The tax and income benefits from a life income gift can enable you to receive additional income for the rest of your life, receive tax considerations, and make a larger gift to the Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center Foundation, or another organization of your choice, than you thought possible.

Your appreciated securities or real estate can be used to fund a trust that will:

- sell the appreciated assets without capital gains tax liability to you
- reinvest the proceeds to pay you a lifetime income

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always doing crazy things during the holidays. Find the humor and smile about it. Give that harried salesperson a smile. It will reduce both of your stress levels.

Dr. Stephen I. Sideroff is Clinical Director of Stress

- relieve you of management burdens
 - entitle you to a current income tax deduction
- After your lifetime, the Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center Foundation would receive the remaining principal to continue essential healthcare services for our community.

To explore the financial and tax benefits of making a life income gift, please contact one of the planned giving officers at: Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center Foundation, 1250 Sixteenth Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404, (213) 319-4350.

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Strategies, a program of The Fit Dimension at Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center. Stress Strategies is designed to help individuals, organizations and corporations manage stress and improve performance.