Limit Your Holiday Stress

With the holidays approaching, it’s a good time to focus on staying as healthy as possible. At this time of year we often find ourselves stressed while trying to keep up with shopping, decorating, cooking, kid’s school events, entertaining and family gatherings.

It is estimated that approximately 69% of people are stressed by the feeling of having a lack of time, limited budgets, and the added pressure to give or get gifts.¹

With so much going on, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed during what is supposed to be the most festive time of year. Consider these tips:

- **Set limits and keep it simple.** Be realistic about what you can do prior to and during the holidays. Don’t take on too much, and schedule time for breaks. Don’t feel obligated to accept every invitation or request.

- **Ask others for help.** Sit down as a family and come up with a list of all the things that need to be done during the holidays. Brainstorm for shortcuts to getting things done, and delegate some tasks to others.

- **Avoid procrastinating.** Putting off certain holiday tasks until the last minute will just cause more stress. Being able to scratch a few items off your list early will make you feel better.

- **Don’t forget to exercise.** If you have a workout plan, stay with it even though you may be keeping some odd hours over the holidays. This will help keep stress in check and burn calories.

Taking the Focus off of Gifts

Have the last few holiday seasons at your house been a rush of shopping for the perfect gift, worrying about your budget, wrapping and shipping presents, and making the house look perfect for the big day? This common experience, which seems to miss the true meaning of the holidays, can be a real letdown.

Fortunately there are ways to get back to basics in enjoying the holidays. It’s not necessary to spend a lot on gifts to show people that you care about them. With a little planning you can have a simpler, yet much more joyful holiday—one built on tradition and family togetherness.

¹ Holiday Stress statistics, American Psychological Association
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Here are some ideas on how to put the focus on holiday experiences and activities, rather than just gift giving:

• If you put up holiday decorations, make it a traditional event. Turn on holiday music, light some scented candles, and set aside other activities.
• Have a “holiday campout” where the family sleeps in the living room. Watch movies and snack on holiday treats.
• Take a leisurely family car trip to view holiday light displays in your area.
• Put in some family volunteer hours at the local food pantry.
• Ask your family to agree on a group outing that could build memories without being costly. Examples could be going ice skating together, visiting a big downtown holiday display, or attending a community interfaith or cultural celebration.
• On a day when everyone in your family has time off, pick a movie that all can agree on, and enjoy an afternoon matinee together.
• If you’re an animal lover, put together a special holiday arrangement of snacks for your pets. Or arrange a family holiday donation to your local animal shelter.

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