

thinking ahead...



Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc.



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WELLNESS WEEKLY



10 Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress & Depression

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression. When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if you know the holidays have taken an emotional toll in previous years. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you may find that you enjoy the holidays this year more than you thought you could.

Tips you can try to prevent holiday stress and depression:

1. Acknowledge your feelings. If aren't able to be with your loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness or grief. It's OK now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings.
2. Seek support. If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
3. Be realistic. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to, but accept that you may have to let go of others. Find new ways to celebrate together from afar, such as sharing pictures and e-mails.
4. Set differences aside. Practice forgiveness. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress too.
5. Stick to a budget. Decide ahead of time how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items and stick to your budget. If you don't, you could feel anxious and tense for months afterward as you struggle to pay the bills.
6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus; this will help prevent the stress from having to make a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten ingredients.
7. Learn to say no. Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed.
8. Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.
9. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do.
10. Rethink resolutions. Resolutions can set you up for failure if they're unrealistic. Don't resolve to change your whole life to make up for past excess. Instead, try to return to basic, healthy lifestyle routines. Set smaller, more specific goals with a reasonable time frame.