

reducing holiday stress

Date / Time

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?

Heart?

Body?

None of the Above

1. Preparing for the upcoming holiday season often times causes stress. Instead of letting holiday demands exhaust and overwhelm you, try a different approach – try more “being” and less “doing”.
2. This approach could help you connect more fully with the holiday experiences, your family, and your life in general, and allow you begin to feel more alive and present.
3. Holiday activities can add stress in many ways such as having more things to do, more disruptions of your daily routine, more disturbances of rest sleep and rest, and dietary changes in what you eat and drink.
4. There is also the time crunch where you feel like you never have enough time to do what you need to, which can lead to a state of unease and restlessness.
5. The disruptions of the holiday season can cause an extended stress response, leading to a chronic stress environment. This chronic stress environment can cause the effects on the body to begin to mount, causing physical and emotional fatigue.
6. Mindfulness allows you to focus on what is happening in the present moment. Practicing mindfulness during the holiday season can be greatly beneficial.
7. By paying attention to the moment-by-moment, instead of being wrapped up in endless holiday activities, you are less likely to be overwhelmed by holiday stress.

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Here are some things you can do to break the seemingly endless cycle of busyness.

1. Make time for yourself each day to just to stop and to be present with yourself, just "being" instead of doing. Find a spot where you are not likely to be disturbed where you can sit or lie comfortably for about five minutes (or longer if you desire).
2. Close your eyes and relax and breathe in and out naturally. Focus your attention on the breath sensations. Breathe in and out naturally and examine of the act of breathing in and breathing out.
3. Be aware of where the breath is most prominently coming from -- - your chest, your nose, your stomach or somewhere else.
4. Don't distract yourself with counting the breaths or watching yourself breath, just visualize the breath rising and falling like waves on the ocean, rising as you inhale and falling as you exhale. Focus on the here and now and concentrate on breathing.
5. Do not manipulate your breathing in any way, just breathe normally and be aware of each breath as it comes and goes. If you notice your attention wandering from the breathing, just acknowledge the distraction and then refocus back on breathing.
6. Make time for yourself each day to rest and play, even if you have to schedule this time like you would a meeting.
7. Learn how to say "no" to invitations, or allow yourself to leave events early. This will help you gain a feeling of being back in control of your life, and will also result in more time and flexibility for you.
8. Look for ways to simplify your life, not only during the holidays but every day as well, without losing the meaning of what you are doing. Be willing to let go of things that are not important or meaningful to you.
9. For example, review your holiday patterns of gift giving, card sending, or party going and look for ways to simplify those activities without losing the essence behind them.

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10. Above all, have holiday spirit (kindness and compassion) for yourself. Especially when you forget to do something or don't do things "perfectly."
11. Learn to connect and "be" with yourself and find that inner peace amidst the holiday chaos all around. Remember, focus on the present and not the presents.

How will you take what you learned from this forward into your life?

thank you for your mindfulness practice

MINDFULNESS

is about love and loving life.

When you cultivate this love,
it gives you **clarity** and **compassion** for life

and your actions happen
in accordance with that.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

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