

MERRY
FREAKIN'
CHRISTMAS.



Preparing for Holiday Stress

Susan Williams





I am the human
version of tangled
Christmas lights.

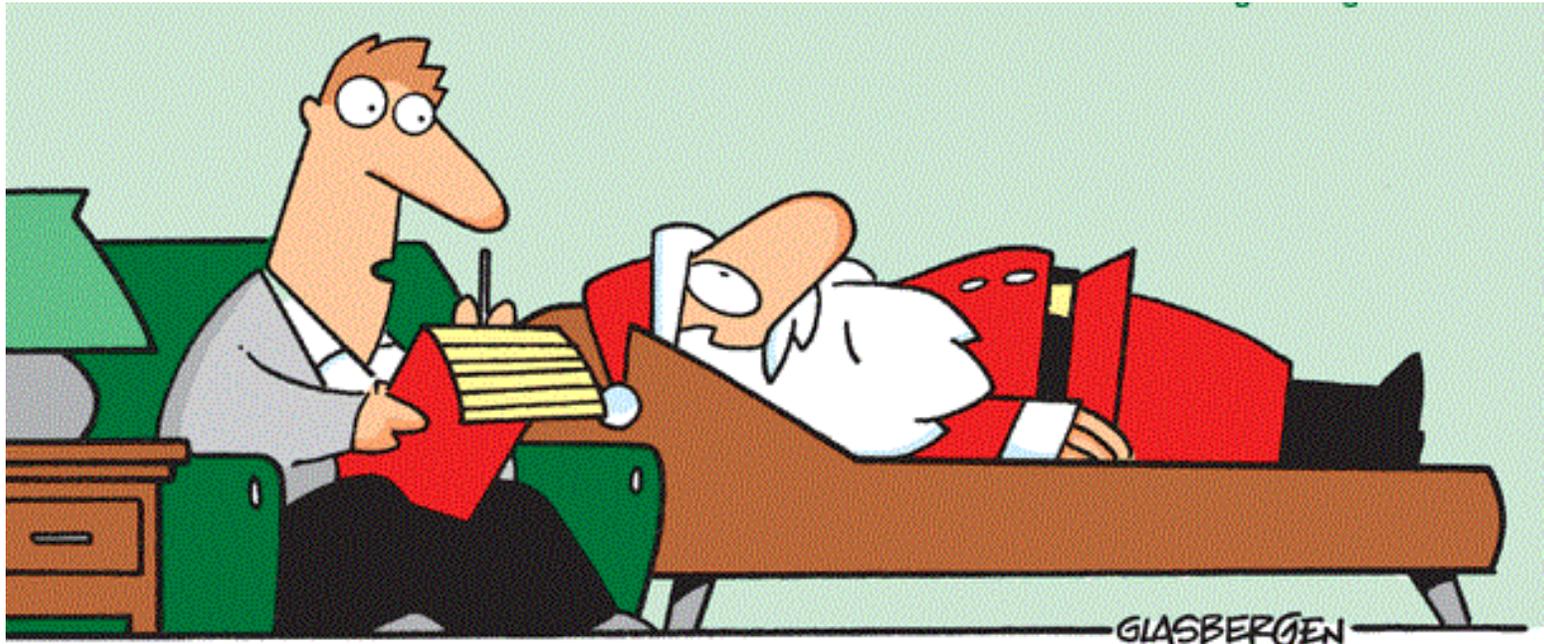


What part of the
holiday season
do you **cherish**?

What part of the
holiday season
do you **dread**?

Stress is...

“The gap between the demands you perceive are being made on you and your perceived resources to meet those demands.”

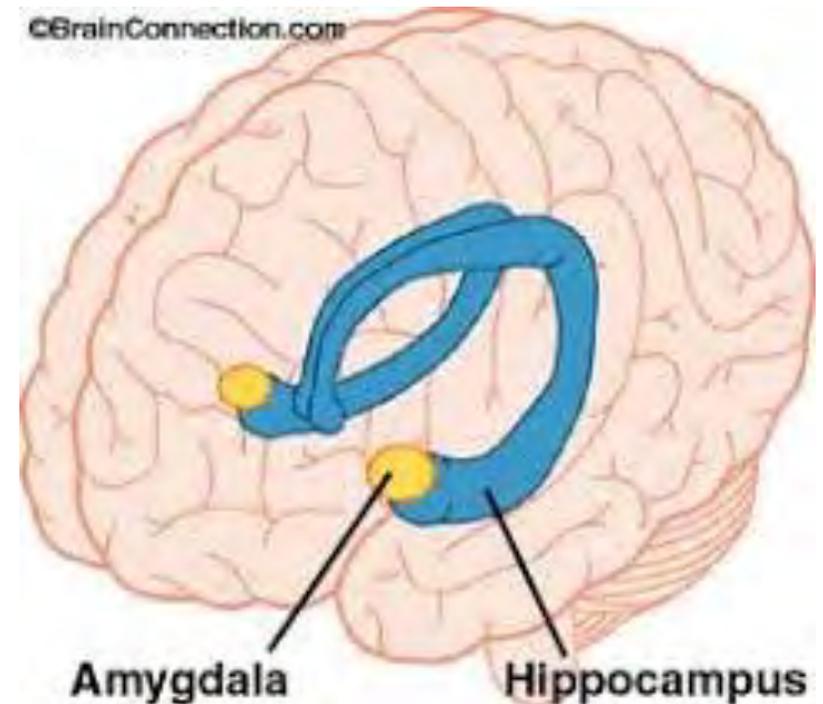


**“It’s normal to get depressed around the holidays,
especially when we put too much pressure on ourselves.”**

Stress is...

- A physical reaction to emotional or environmental stimulus
- There is a chemical reaction to a perceived or real threat

Increases heart rate
Muscle tension
Fast, shallow breathing
Increased blood pressure



During the Holidays

61%

are more stressed

68%

are more tired

52%

are more irritable





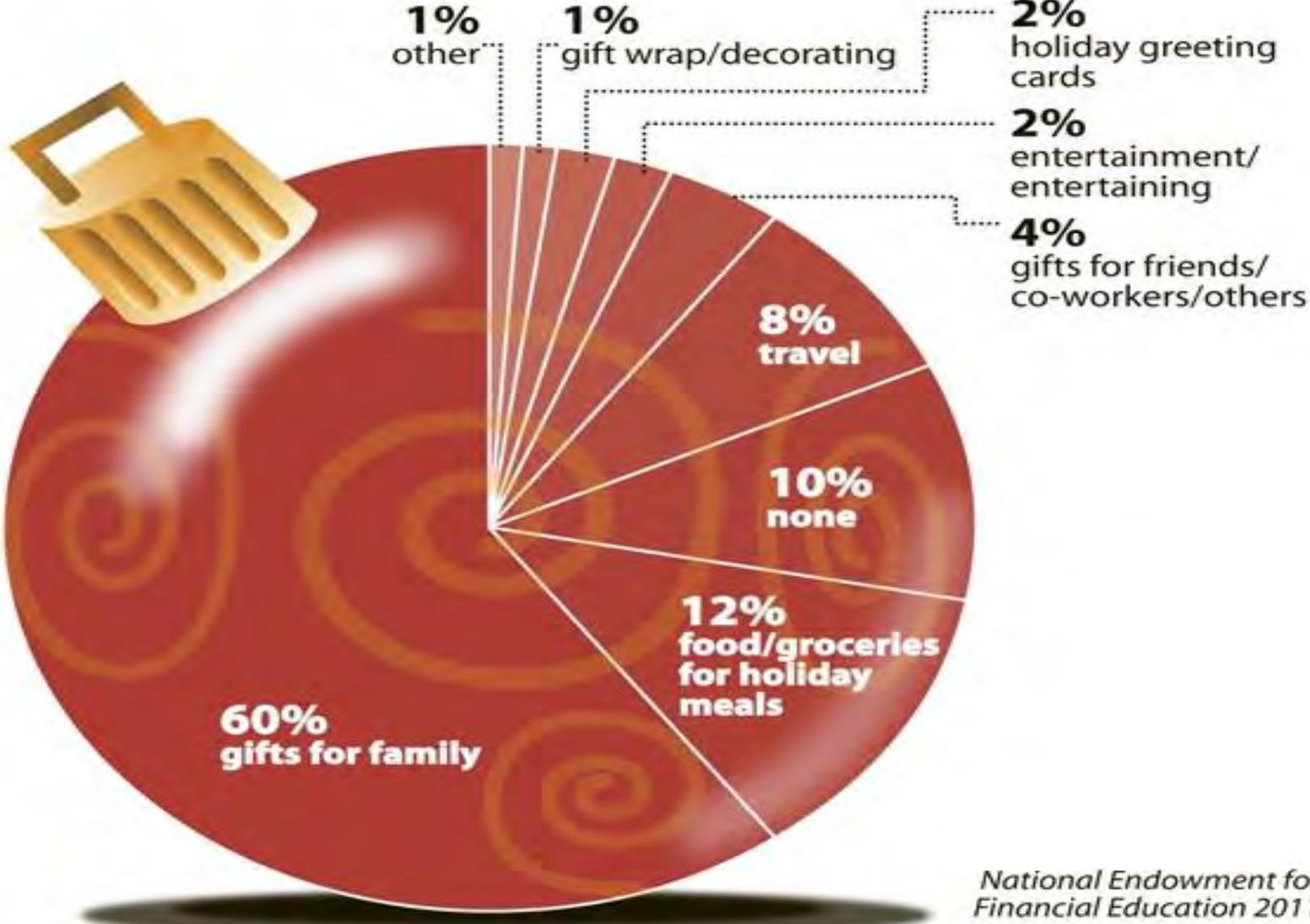
What are your holiday stressors?



Major Sources of Stress

- 67% identify lack of time
 - 47% identify receiving and giving gifts
 - 68% managing their workload so they can take time off
- 16% Holiday parties or events
 - 19% Disappointing gifts
 - 23% Seasonal music
 - 24% Seeing certain relatives
 - 25% Traveling
 - 28% Gift shopping
 - 37% Getting into debt
 - 37% Gaining weight
 - 68% Crowds and long lines

Largest Holiday Expenditure



National Endowment for
Financial Education 2011



Family ...

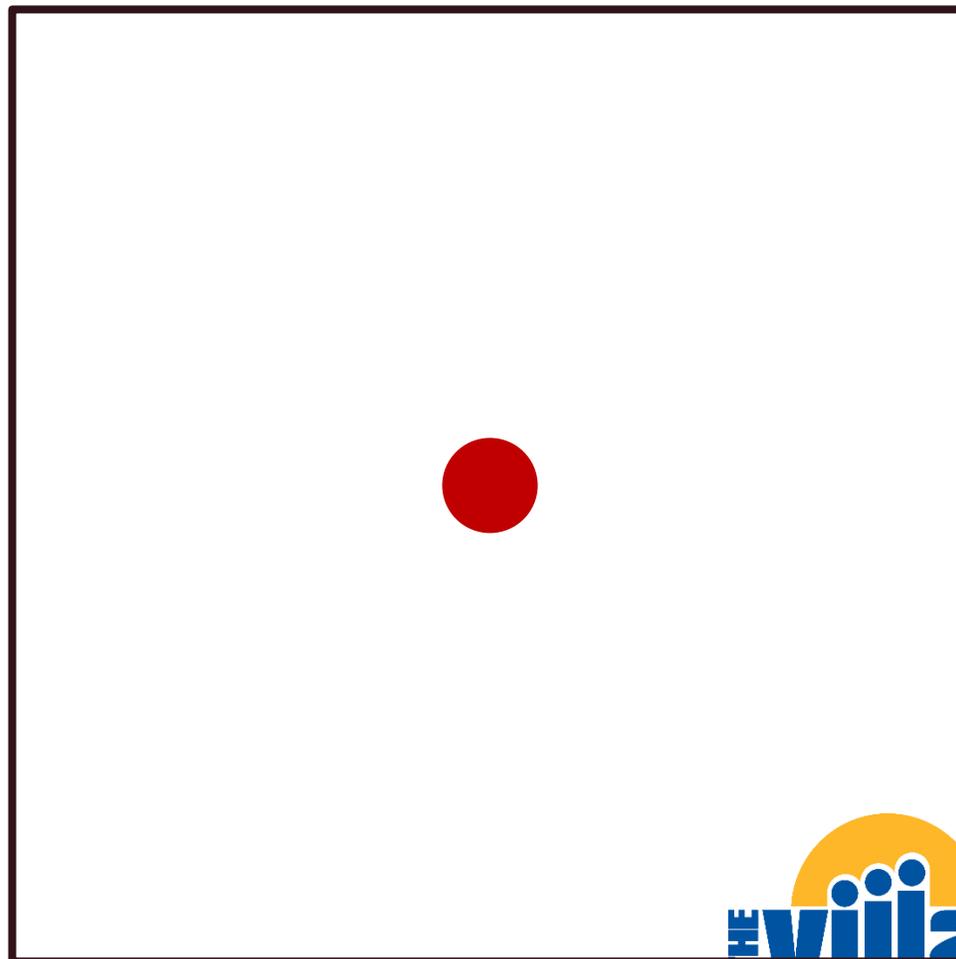
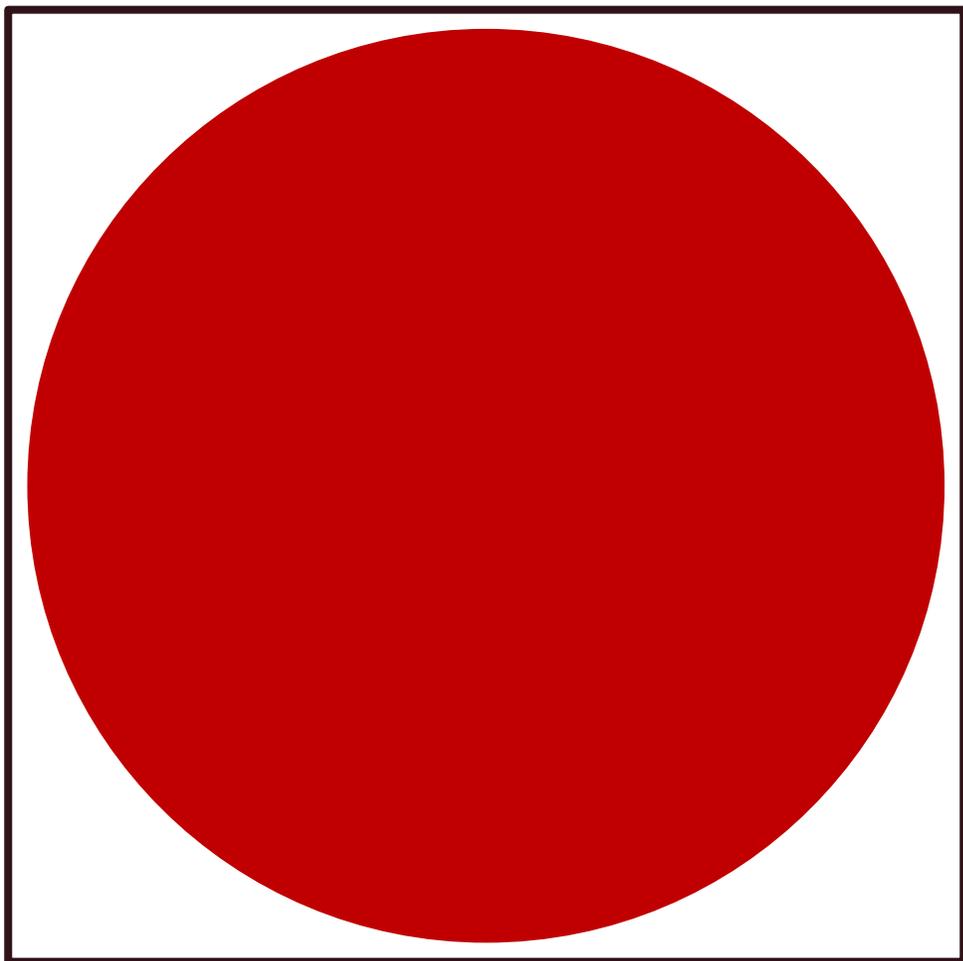
- Changes
- Monotony
- Toxic relatives
- Unhappy memories
- Old patterns





Home for
the Holidays

Grief ...





Holiday Spending

2021	\$889 billion
2022	\$929.5 billion
2023	+ 4%

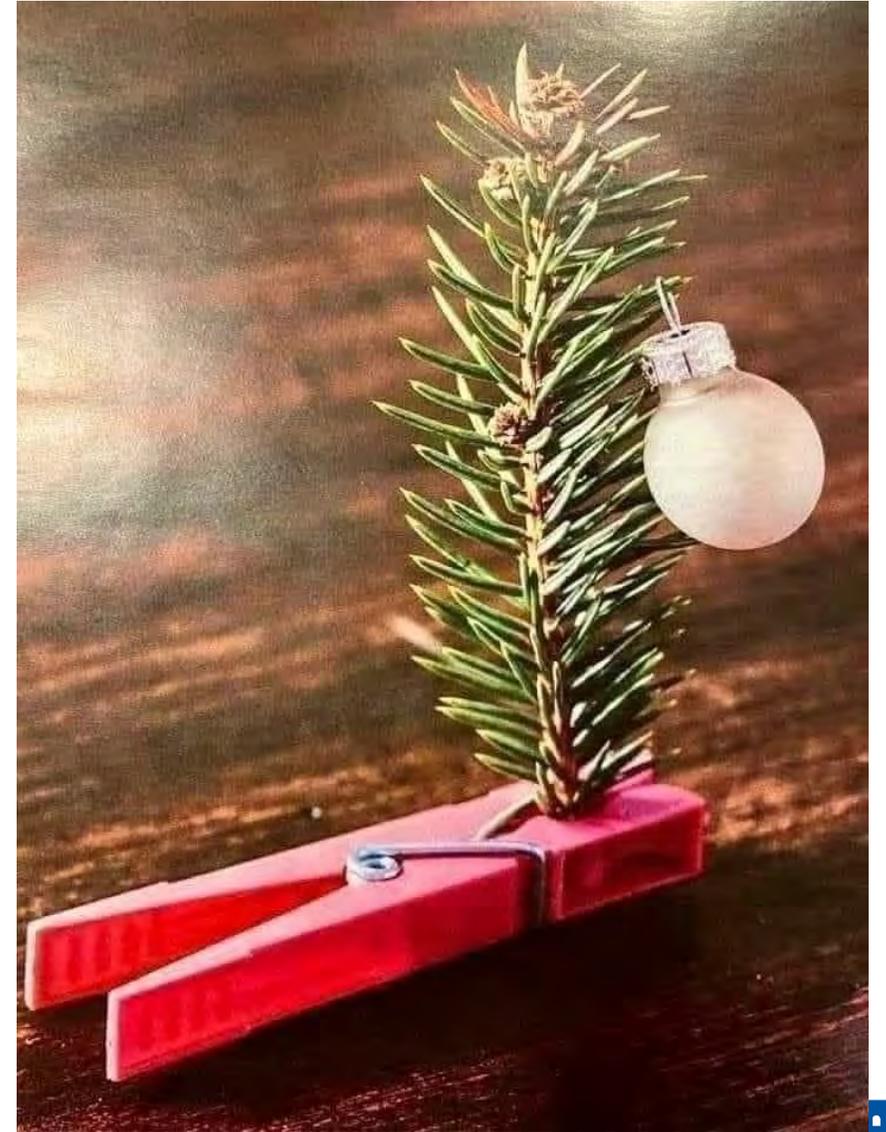
+ \$1,000,000,000,000

Estimated 15% was *returned*

(150 billion)

Cultural Expectations





Cultural Expectations

What Culture
Wants From
Us

≠

What
We Want
For Ourselves

YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED

TO CONTINUE

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

THAT LEAVE YOU

BROKE,

OVERWHELMED, OR

EXHAUSTED





Christmas To-Do List

Be

-~~Buy~~ Presents

-Wrap ~~Gifts~~ *Someone
in a hug*

-Send ~~Gifts~~ *Peace*

Donate

-~~Shop~~ for Food

Be

-~~See~~ the Lights



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How Do You Go From This....



To



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Be realistic

- Don't compare to past holidays
- Know that some things will not be perfect
- Do not overestimate your time and money commitments



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Be clear on your values

Using our values as a guide, we make healthier decisions, feel less resentful, and are less likely

to succumb to family, social, and cultural expectations.

<https://tinyurl.com/5bkatj2r>

Determining your Values

1. Go through the list quickly, crossing off any that **don't immediately** resonate.
2. Go through the remaining list a second time, circling those that resonate.
3. Go through the circled list, highlighting those that **really** resonate. (max 5)
4. Use the Paired Comparison Worksheet to prioritize your Top 5

Accountability	Excitement	Practicality
Accuracy	Expertise	Preparedness
Achievement	Exploration	Professionalism
Adventurousness	Expressiveness	Prudence
Altruism	Fairness	Quality-orientation
Ambition	Faith	Reliability
Assertiveness	Family-orientedness	Resourcefulness
Balance	Fidelity	Restraint
Being the best	Fitness	Results-oriented
Belonging	Fluency	Rigor
Boldness	Focus	Security
Calmness	Freedom	Self-actualization
Carefulness	Fun	Self-control
Challenge	Generosity	Selflessness
Cheerfulness	Goodness	Self-reliance
Clear-mindedness	Grace	Sensitivity

Don't Lose Sight Of What Really Counts

When overwhelmed with the stress ask yourself

- Where does this fit into the grand scheme of things?
- Even in this moment of stress, can I find a way to make it pleasant?
- Can I use this moment of frustration as an opportunity to reflect?

Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Plan ahead

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting people, and other activities (don't forget to schedule time for the immediate family).

Be proactive

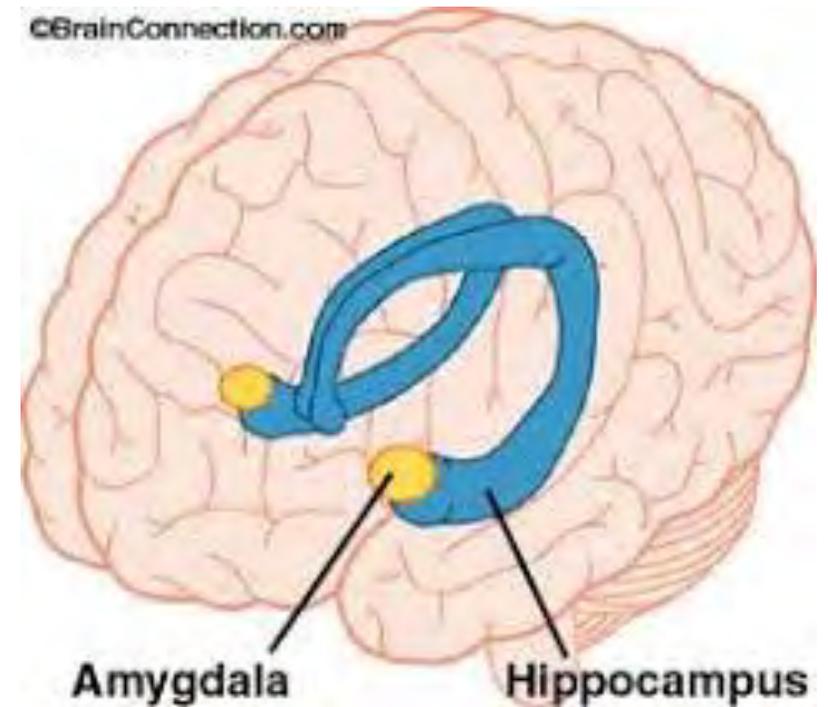


Express Gratitude

Gratitude Is A “Natural Antidepressant”

When we express and receive gratitude our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, neurotransmitters responsible for emotions that make us feel good.

They enhance our mood and make us feel; happy from the inside.





Brene Brown on Joy & Gratitude
<https://youtu.be/2ljSHUc7TXM>



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Learn to Say No. Really.

Five ways to Say- No

1. Suggest another time of the year
2. Don't say yes, if you will be saying no later
3. Delegate
4. Just say No... no explanation needed
5. Stop the "but I have to" talk

When We Possess Healthy Personal Boundaries

- We have improved self-confidence and healthy self-concept
- We are more in touch with reality
- Are better able to communicate with others
- Have better more fulfilling relationships
- Have more stability and control over our lives



Give Back

- Volunteer somewhere that means something to you
- Budget for charitable donations
- Remind and refocus



25 Random Acts of Christmas Kindness

1. Tape change to a vending machine for a stranger to find.
2. Hand out a compliment card.
3. Donate food to your food pantry.
4. Make a thank you card for your mail carrier.
5. Candy cane bomb a parking lot.
6. Take supplies to an animal shelter.
7. Put change in the Salvation Army bucket.
8. Send a hug in the mail.
9. Pick up litter.
10. Leave a popcorn surprise at the DVD rental machine.
11. Write a Smile It Forward note for a friend or family member.
12. Donate toys to charity.
13. Pay for a stranger's coffee.
14. Make a gift for your teacher.
15. Do yard work for a neighbor.
16. Let someone go ahead of you in line.
17. Feed the birds with a candy cane bird food ornament.
18. Make a sweet treat for your mailman.
19. Do a chore for someone.
20. Smile at everyone you see.
21. Pass out stickers to kids waiting in line.
22. Make a card for a neighbor.
23. Thank your sanitation worker with a yard sign.
24. Leave kindness stones in the park.
25. Sing Christmas carols for your neighbors.



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Don't abandon healthy habits

- Do not let the holidays become a free for all, food, booze, and poor sleep



Find ways to eat healthy

Stay active

Get ~~sleep~~ rest



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Prioritize

~~Make time~~ for
yourself

time

Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress



Acknowledge your feelings

- Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling
- Even if it's sadness



**POV: When you try to
toss out your feelings
instead of feeling them**

Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress



Set Aside Differences

- Try to accept family and friends as they are
- Be understanding
- Not every event needs to be a battleground

Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Reach Out

If you are feeling lonely, isolated, seek out community, reach out to friends



Tips For Coping with Holiday Stress

Seek Professional Help

Seeking professional help can give you that supportive person who can help you to develop coping techniques to deal with the stress of the family, work, changes, and other personal demands

Asking for help is not a sign of weakness – taking care of yourself is a sign of strength

38 Ways to Relieve Stress

In less than 10 minutes

by Sharon Martin, LCSW

- Listen to your favorite music
- Get some fresh air
- Stretch or do some yoga poses
- Do a grounding exercise
- Disconnect from technology 
- Talk to someone supportive
- Meditate
- Look at photos that make you smile 
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Read for pleasure
- Walk, bike, or skateboard around the block
- Count to 10 slowly and repeat
- Dance
- Journal
- Write down 10 things you're grateful for 
- Doodle, draw, color, or Zentangle
- Chew a piece of gum
- Watch a funny video on YouTube
- Sit in the sun 
- Punch a pillow
- Read an inspirational quote
- Spend time with your pets 
- Knit
- Take a shower
- Do 20 jumping jacks
- Do something nice for someone else
- Visualize a safe, comforting place
- Pick some flowers (or pinecones or leaves or seashells or rocks)
- Give yourself a neck massage 
- Kick a soccer ball
- Diffuse essential oils or use scented lotions or candles
- Slow, deep breathing 
- Hug a loved one
- Savor a cup of decaffeinated tea or coffee
- Repeat a mantra
- Do a progressive relaxation exercise
- Tend your garden; water and talk to your plants 
- Make a list of your worries and identify which you can do something about

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Holiday RULES

- 1. Don't go into debt trying to show people how much you love them.**
- 2. Don't go visit your family if it compromises your mental health.**
- 3. If someone comments on your weight...
Eat them.**

Thank You



Holiday Stress Management 2024

• 800-627-8220



• HAPPY.

Holidays