

How We Live

Chill out: Easy ways to reduce holiday stress

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Worried that you'll never get everything done and it's already the first week of December? We asked psychologist Christine Ziegler, director of the Hudson Valley Center for Cognitive Therapy in Upper Nyack, for tips on beating holiday stress.

Should you cut back on doing things for yourself, or try to squeeze them in anyway?

Taking time for yourself is a good way to lower stress levels during the holiday season.

It's often helpful to choose two to three self-care strategies and make a point of implementing them during the holiday season. For example, exercise is quick to take a hit when things get busy, especially around the holidays. Since regular physical activity is consistently shown to improve mood, think about how you can adjust your exercise routine rather than eliminate it all together during this time. Try to also spend some time each day in the natural sunlight, which can also help boost your mood and lower stress.

Is it important to say no if you're feeling overcommitted?

We can stretch ourselves too thin by saying yes to every invitation we receive during the holidays. Be very selective with which invitations you accept, and

try to avoid taking on new projects and commitments during the holiday season.

How do you figure out which goals you can actually achieve?

Remember that the holiday season is only about a month long, and be realistic about what you can accomplish in that time frame. Time is especially limited if you are balancing your work and family life with all the extra things that need to get done before the holidays. Prioritize what is most important to you ahead of time to be sure time is allotted for the events that are most important and meaningful to you.

Accept that time and energy are finite resources and need to be budgeted in a similar way as you might budget your money during the holiday season. For example, you might decide that since both of your children are in holiday performances this year, you will forego or downsize the huge party you were planning to host.

Less is often more during the holiday season, in



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A local expert says relax and be realistic about what you can accomplish during the hectic holiday season.

terms of truly enjoying the fewer things that you choose to do.

What are some easy ways to overcome holiday worries?

If panic sets in as you are overwhelmed with how much you need to do, take a quick break to "reset." Spend some time with a loved one or engage in an activity that has nothing to do with your preparations.

Then make a list of everything you need to do. Since a long list can be overwhelming, break the list down by the week or the day to make it more manageable.

Above all, keep in mind what the true meaning of the holiday season is all about for you. The season can be a special time of the year when you spend time with those you love and reflect on the many blessings that you have in your life.

Learn more about the Hudson Valley Center for Cognitive Therapy at hvccct.com.

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