



Plan now to trim stress from holiday experience

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That wonderful time of the year is approaching, and, before you know it, one radio station will begin playing Christmas music daily even before Thanksgiving is over.

Stores are decked out for Christmas, and Christmas advertising already has begun. Loved ones are making travel arrangements to be home for the holidays.

How will it all end? The stage is set for many of us to wind up exhausted and stressed by trying to accommodate too many activities in a limited span of time while also trying not to overspend.

However, we can use some "lessons learned" from previous holiday experiences to keep the stress levels manageable.

As one author noted, trying to balance job and family expectations with holiday activities is sort of like attempting to fit a size 10 foot in a size 8 shoe.

The adrenaline rush of trying to be all things to everyone can take its toll on the best of us, so careful planning should be the goal. Here are some tips to consider.

- Determine how much additional activity you can take on since your normal day-to-day demands will most likely remain constant.
- Rethink your approach to this holiday season so that you come out organized and in control.
- Do not try to be all things to everyone.
- If you went overboard last year, do not do it this year. Cut back on gift-giving, or at least cut back on costs of gifts.

- If hosting Thanksgiving and/or Christmas dinner, ease up and let your guests make it a buffet experience with everyone bringing a dish.
- Sit down with the kids and be up-front with how your family will handle the holiday this year. Let them know that they will need to help, too.
- Set a date to put up the tree in order to avoid a last-minute rush.
- If you are the type of person who wants things done a certain way and everything done on time, then ease up and allow for some flexibility. And, if it winds up that you and your family are going to be late for an event, let that be OK.
- Make a list of tasks and deadline dates for completing each item. If you are a wee bit late, let that be OK too.
- Finally, have fun.

Our approach to the holiday season can be our own worst enemy, or, if handled well, can get us through the season with minimal stress. If you tend to view the holidays with dread and by feeling overwhelmed, then stop, take a deep breath, assess the situation and make some mid-course corrections.

Will this make the next two months perfect with every day flowing smoothly? No, but it can allow you to ease up on yourself and others, allowing for some semblance of a good balance of the day-to-day demands with holiday activities.

Remember! Don't let the holidays control you; instead, you be the one in control.

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