

HEALTH

Take stress out of the holidays



When most people think about the holiday season they get excited. It's a fun time of year where people are festive, happy, glowing, socialising, spending time with friends and family, eating nice foods and drinking nice wines. What could be better?

So many times, we create expectations of what the holidays should be like, expectations that can turn out to be a lot different than what actually happens:

Sarah really wants this Christmas to be special—she hasn't spoken to her father in years, but she wants to make this year different. When Christmas comes, she makes an extra effort to include him at her family dinner. She bought him a very special gift and is excited about him being part of her holiday experience. She feels this is going to be a turning point in their relationship and she is excited about the possibility of rebuilding a relationship with him. On Christmas day, Sarah's father doesn't show up.

Our expectations often let us down because many times, the holidays aren't as perfect as we make them out to be.

Even if the holidays do meet all of our glorious expectations, when the holiday season winds up, reality quickly sinks in. Often times we end up pinching pennies to pay the bills because too much money was spent on gifts, food and drinks. We make a New Year's resolution to lose weight by diet and exercise because too many calories were consumed during the holidays. We are faced with feelings of loneliness and sadness as close friends and family members go their separate ways and jump back into their normal, busy routines.

What can you do to make sure that you're able to enjoy the holidays without the risk of being let down? Some of our most important tips for taking stress out of the holidays are:

Set realistic expectations:

Most holiday depression is caused by unrealistic expectations. Make sure you think about your holiday expectations about family, friends, presents and your own personal emotions in

advance of the season.

Have a budget in place before shopping for gifts:

What does your current budget look like? How much money will you devote to this holiday season? Don't set yourself up for failure for the months after the holiday season. Create a budget and stick to it before the season arrives.

Avoid hectic schedules:

Make sure you get enough rest. Sit down and plan your calendar. Don't take on so much or you will be left burned out for the New Year.

Regroup and revitalise:

Set aside time for your favorite holiday traditions. Create your own holiday experience, one with new and old traditions combined and ones that will sustain and nurture you.

Avoid family differences:

Try and keep it light—share fun stories and family memories. Avoid confrontations or differences that you may have with other family members during the holidays—these are better left to deal with once routines are back to normal.

Help those less fortunate:

Adopt a family in need, visit The Pines home, or donate a toy to the Red Cross. Opening your heart to others during the holiday season can make you feel more whole and connected to the community.

Avoid excesses:

Don't eat and drink too much. Practice moderation with holiday treats. Try to stick with a healthy diet and don't forget to exercise.

Talk to someone you trust if the holidays are too much for you to handle:

We recognise that the holidays are a difficult and stressful time for many people. You don't have to go through the season in silence or on your own.

Don't get us wrong, the holidays are a great time of year. But it's important to prepare for things like spending and budgeting ahead of time and also to prepare your own expectations around what the holiday experience will be like for you. With a little bit of preparation and the right frame of mind, we hope that your holidays will be joyful and stress-free!