

## Assorted Tips for the Holidays

1. Keep a master calendar for yourself and your family so that you can tell, at a glance, what is reasonable and what is not. Do not commit to anything before checking the calendar. If certain gatherings/events are likely to be stressful for you, consider opting out, or at least limiting your time there.
2. Accept change that is inevitable. As individuals and families grow older, traditions often change as well. Hold onto those that you can, if you enjoy them. But know that in some cases that may no longer be possible. Some traditions may need to be replaced, modified, or given up.
3. If you can't give up sending cards, send them in January. People might actually appreciate them more, as they will have more time to read them.
4. If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, or any other kind of loss, remind yourself it's ok to take time to express your feelings. Know that you are not alone – that many people struggle with grief and loss during the holidays. Don't try to force yourself to be happy just because it's a holiday. There will be other holidays when you'll be feeling differently.
5. If you are worried about being lonely, call friends now to schedule time to be together. Plan to participate in spiritual/ religious gatherings, volunteer in a community service, or join other group functions if that appeals to you. Also, consider the idea that it is ok to be alone for part of the holidays. List things you can do to enjoy yourself that you haven't had time for till now.
6. Instead of purchasing gifts, send a poem, photograph, drawing, or an attractive natural object you have created or discovered.
7. Try making one special dish a day (or one dish every two or three days) for the holiday season, rather than doing a cooking/baking marathon in one day that leaves you exhausted and everybody stuffed.
8. Make a list of everyone to whom you plan to give presents. Make a budget. Make sure the gift list fits into the budget.
9. Suggest to extended family that you each pick one family member's name (perhaps out of a hat) and that you each buy, or make, one gift for that one person. Suggest agreeing on a maximum dollar amount.
10. Tell family members that you do not wish to receive gifts, and that rather than buying gifts, you will donate money to charities in their name (unless they have some objection to their name being used).

11. Buy gift certificates. Doing this online is even simpler.
12. Talk with your family about identifying one or two simple rituals or ceremonies that would be meaningful to do together at home, and that hopefully does not include travel or spending money. Examples: lighting candles, singing certain songs, reading a story or poem aloud, taking a walk together and noticing the beauty in ordinary things. The possibilities are endless.
13. In general, keep to your normal eating, sleeping, and exercising routine. Some indulgence is fine and fun. In fact, it isn't reasonable to expect yourself not to indulge at all. However, avoid overdoing it – moderation is the key.
14. Don't expect yourself to lose weight over the holidays- you are just setting yourself up to fail. A much more reasonable goal is to maintain your weight during this time.
15. Unrealistic expectations are a huge source of stress. Be wary of becoming a holiday perfectionist. Remind yourself frequently that you can't do it all perfectly, and in fact you can't do it all period. Keep your expectations of yourself, and others, realistic. Nobody's perfect, and many of us are particularly imperfect during the stress of the holidays.
16. Set differences aside. Try to accept family members and friends as they are. Because many people are stressed during the holidays, probably this is not the time to address grievances and expect good results.
17. Give yourself permission not to participate in holiday activities if they give you no satisfaction at all. Go away or get some good books to read or movies to watch.
18. Give yourself the gift of self-care. Recognize the holidays are draining, because of the all the extra time and energy demands. It is important to take good care of yourself, so you stay well. Eat well, sleep enough, exercise moderately and regularly. Take time, even if only briefly, to restore yourself through doing things you love – a hobby, a book, a walk, etc.
19. Remember a little bit goes a long way. For example, studies show that only ten minutes of brisk walking yields measurable benefits.
20. Give yourself the present of the present moment. Develop skills that enable you to be more aware of the moment you are experiencing now, rather than having your mind preoccupied with the past or future.