



## December: National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month

December is National Stress-Free Family Holiday Month. The end of the year can easily turn into a very stressful season due to holiday travel, increases in financial expenses, and the managing expectations of family and friends. Feelings of loneliness and grief over the loss of loved ones may increase, as well. With proper planning and tools, steps can be taken to ensure that this month remains a joyous time of the year!

### Tips to Manage Stress Levels During the Holidays:

- **Combat Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Shorter days and less sunlight may trigger depression in some people. It is important to **stay hydrated**, maintain a **regular exercise or movement** routine, and **spend time with those who love you** and make you laugh.
- **Look for ways to manage holiday grief:** Everyone grieves differently and all feelings are valid. Spend time with those who can **help you celebrate and fondly remember past joyous moments** with departed loved ones.
- **Make a budget:** The holiday spirit can inspire a desire for extra generosity. However, remember to set a budget. Try to establish boundaries around expenses related to shopping and activities.
- **Be kind to yourself:** The holiday season can be an extremely busy time of year but try to carve out some **time for yourself**.
- **Don't seek perfection:** Establish your own ideas of success and accomplishment without comparison.
- **Simplify wherever possible** and be realistic about what you can and can't do.
- **Avoid social media:** When it comes to social media, keep in mind that things are not always as they appear to be.
- **Create a mindset of graciousness:** Don't attempt to resolve difficult issues during the holidays; save it for another time. This is a time to remember that you don't have control over other's feelings and actions. Instead, try to extend grace to others, while maintaining realistic expectations.

The holiday season is a joyous time of year, but it can also present challenges for many. Acknowledging your stressors and developing techniques to overcome them can help you to maintain a stress-free holiday.

### Additional Resources:

- Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/coping-with-holiday-stress-keeping-our-expectations-realistic>
- Silver Lake Psychology: <https://www.silverlakepsychology.com/mental-health-screening/>
- MHA: <https://www.mhanational.org/about-mha-screening>

