

# Mind Matters

## Surviving – and thriving – during the Holidays

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Mention the holidays and most folks are filled with glee, picturing beautifully wrapped gifts, family celebrations, and perfectly cooked meals. It's not until we're in the thick of things that we realize we're overwhelmed - trying to do it all, make everyone happy, and juggle more parties and pageants than most people can handle. You can avoid holiday burn-out by following these simple steps:

**Focus on the act of giving.** Holidays are times for us to celebrate each other. Shopping for that “perfect gift” gives even veteran shoppers a headache. Start a tradition of giving only one present per family member. Set a cost limit and encourage “gifts from the heart” and gifts that focus on service to other family members.

**Set a date to decorate.** Choose a particular evening to put up your holiday decorations. Many families like to do this the day after Thanksgiving in order to enjoy the season for a longer period of time. Make a rule that every family member must help and contribute time. Once the house is decorated you will feel less stressed about everything else that needs to be done.

**Don't wait to wrap.** Once you've brought a gift home, get it wrapped. Don't let all the gifts pile up until the last minute. Use the wrapped gifts to decorate your home.

**Take care of yourself.** Make sure that you and your family are eating three healthy meals each day and two healthy snacks. Include as many raw veggies as you can in your lunch and dinner. Keep a bowl of seasonal fruit on the counter or in the fridge. Go easy on sugar, alcohol, dairy and processed foods. Balance is everything.

**Take a walk.** Do a little bit of exercise – any kind you like - every single day. Physical activity boosts your metabolism and helps release feel-good chemicals that will keep stress and sadness at bay.

**Get enough sleep and down-time.** Plan to get 8-10 hours of restful sleep per night; this will give you the energy to focus and be productive the next day. Sleep also helps you regulate your mood. Plan down-time too. One good way to do this is to pick out at least five holiday movies to watch as a family during the month of December. You'll all look forward to movie night and it will help you relax.

**Don't overdo it.** Limit the amount of parties, celebrations and gatherings your family will attend in November and December. Stress begins to mount when trying to participate in every activity, be everywhere, and please everyone. Learn to politely say “no thanks.”

### Me Minutes

The holidays can be a very emotional time. Nearly all of us have a few moments of sadness during a family gathering when we look around and realize who is no longer with us. Feeling sad is a normal response. To cope with these feelings, try writing a letter to the loved one you miss, creating a special ornament or decoration in their memory, or volunteering some time at their favorite charity. Doing something to honor the spirit of your loved one will make you feel closer to them.

