

WELL BALANCED

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Navigating HOLIDAY STRESS



The holiday season can be a complex time for many. Joyous gatherings, events, and traditions are often accompanied by emotions such as sadness and grief, leading to heightened stress. According to the American Institute of Stress, 70% of Americans feel stressed during the holidays, often due to factors such as:

- Financial pressures
- Family gatherings
- Expectations to have a perfect holiday
- Travel
- Work obligations.

Trying to balance the holiday demands of gifts, parties, family commitments, and more, all while managing regular responsibilities, can quickly become overwhelming. Beyond the hustle and bustle, the holiday season can be especially difficult for those grieving a loss or unable to spend time with their loved ones, further adding to holiday worries.

People who experience heightened emotions around the holidays may have a stress response of increased headaches, changes in eating habits, trouble sleeping, or turning to substances to cope.

Even during a busy or challenging season, it is possible to navigate the holidays with greater ease. Practicing gratitude can be one of the most effective ways to reduce stress and balance your days—In fact, the CDC reports that it may be the “best-kept secret to reduce stress and feel better.”



- **Begin a gratitude journal.** Writing your thoughts down in a gratitude journal allows for deeper reflection and provides an opportunity to revisit what you're grateful for over time.

Additional Strategies to Manage Holiday Stress

While gratitude is a powerful tool, it's not the only way to manage holiday stress. Consider these additional approaches:

- **Acknowledge your feelings.** Give yourself permission to feel what you are feeling, and remember that it is normal to have mixed emotions. For example, you might feel both stressed and excited about the holidays at the same time.
- **Learn to say "no."** It can be tempting to accept every invitation to parties, gatherings, or social events. Remind yourself that it is okay to say "no," especially if your health and well-being are being affected by increased stress due to the season.



Did You Know?

The average shopper is expected to spend around \$902 during the holidays. Creating a budget, tracking your spending, and giving in meaningful ways, such as homemade gifts, shared experiences, or thoughtful gestures, can help reduce stress and make the season more joyful.

- **Practice healthy habits.** The holiday season can make it especially challenging for many to maintain healthy routines. When stress is high, it is even more important to prioritize balanced nutrition, quality sleep, and regular physical activity. These habits help protect your well-being and serve as proactive tools for managing stress.
- **Reach out for support.** If you're struggling to manage stress on your own, support is available. Consider exploring resources through your