

DE-STRESSING DECEMBER

Ten Tips For Making Your Holiday Season Stress Free

By Monica Ricci

If the normally joyous holiday season makes you nervous, anxious and stressed out from anticipation, there is hope for you. Below are ten tips for reducing your holiday stress level and increasing your enjoyment of the season.

1. Don't try to do all the cooking yourself for your holiday dinner. It's more fun and less stress when you ask your guests to contribute something special to the meal. They will feel needed and you'll get a break!
2. Be aware of your sugar intake through the holidays. Increased sugar levels can make you depressed and bloated. Try to avoid as many holiday treats as you can, so you don't end up stressing over potential weight-gain come January.
3. Give up the Perfect Holiday Myth. Nothing is ever perfect, so stop worrying about things that don't matter. Believe it or not, nobody really cares if the decorations aren't flawless, the wine isn't cold enough, or the pie crust is a little overdone.
4. Invite people to your gatherings and then figure about half of them will have other commitments. Plan accordingly so you don't overspend your money on way too much food. Remember to enjoy the people who DO attend, instead of lamenting over how many sent regrets.
5. Don't put lights all the way around your Christmas tree. Drape them back and forth, but only put them on the sides that you can see. That way, when you take them down, you don't have to walk circles around the tree, you just stand in front and pull them off.
6. If you're handy with a sewing machine, make fabric drawstring bags in varying sizes and festive fabrics. Every Christmas, reuse the bags for gift giving under your tree at home, instead of using wrapping paper. You will save yourself money, as well as hours of wrapping time!
7. Allow extra time for all your errands this month. No matter what, things just seem to be more hectic in December, and everyone wants to be all the same places you want to be. Psych yourself up for it by expecting delays. If you are mentally prepared for it in advance, it won't stress you as much.
8. Choose which traditions are important to you and ditch the rest. There is no reason to aggravate yourself by sticking with traditions you don't like, simply for the sake of tradition. Start some new ones of your own this year and leave the old ones behind.

9. Because you see your stuff so often, you forget how much you really have, and you may keep things simply because you've had them for so long. The holidays are a great time of year to evaluate your home decor. Pack your everyday knick-knacks away when you break out the holiday décor, and then after the holidays, only put back those items that you really love. You can garage sale or donate the rest. You'll be amazed at how a few decorative pieces can have a greater impact than a lot of knick-knacks sitting around.

10. Remember to relax in between all the running around! Get to bed early as often as possible and treat yourself to a nightly hot shower by candlelight. Just turn out the lights, close the door, and light a few votives in your bathroom. It's easy and it's a great way to unwind and feel pampered, even for men!

Monica Ricci has been an organizing and productivity specialist since 1999. She offers onsite consulting, as well as motivational seminars and workshops, which teach effective organizing and simplifying and effectiveness strategies for home and work. Reach Monica at www.CatalystOrganizing.com or 770-569-2642.