



How To Survive The Inevitable Holiday Stress

Camarillo, Calif. (November 21, 2022).—You can feel it coming—the holiday ads are everywhere; decorations fill stores. Even if you love the holidays, it can be a stressful time. Adding to the stress are concerns over illness (a possible COVID uptick, an unusually severe flu season) and dealing with gatherings with opinionated relatives who seem to get louder every year. Another no-win anxiety inducer is to expect your holidays to be stress-free. That's just not going to happen, says [Dr. Noelle Nelson](#), psychologist, author and host of the podcast "[Up!](#)"

"No matter how much you plan, something is bound to go wrong. The holidays are part of life and life isn't perfect," says Nelson. "There is plenty to cause stress. Everything is more expensive this year. You're bracing yourself for at least one or two uncomfortable moments among relatives who haven't seen each other since the pandemic began and who want to discuss the latest election results. You're having everyone over to your house for a big family meal. What could possibly go wrong? Instead of feeling holiday goodwill and cheer, all you feel is stress and frustration."

Nelson counsels that when feelings of exasperation well up, take some time to relax. It could be as simple as going for [a walk](#) or [watching cute animal videos](#) on social media. Both activities have been shown to reduce blood pressure and heart rates.

Nelson also suggests exercising at least two or three times a week. "We tend to eat more during the holidays and then feel guilty and stressed after we do," says Nelson. "Exercising can offset the added calories and stimulate endorphins that give you a sense of well-being. Also, make an effort to arrange a night out with friends you enjoy being around. Make it a 'no-gift giving' evening—a definite stress reducer. Do something to help others. The feeling you get when you give with no strings attached is the best feeling in the world."

Above all, Nelson says don't try to please everyone. "It won't happen. That's not even the point of the holidays," says Nelson. "It's a time to be grateful for the people you love and to show compassion and caring with the community around you."

She says that if you begin to feel overwhelmed, take a deep breath, step back and remind yourself of what a good and worthwhile human being you are. Nelson adds, "Decide to enjoy the holidays with a happy heart, however imperfect the holidays may be."

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