

WELLNESS WORKS



November 2018

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Although not all the leaves have fallen from the trees yet, it will soon be time for the holidays! For many people, the fun, food and family this time of year can lead to stress and anxiety. Whether this is just a tough time of year for you or you're feeling overwhelmed with all the demands on your time, you're not alone. Some of these strategies may help you get through the season with less stress.

Ward off the holiday blues

The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays.

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or if you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings.

Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect. In fact, they usually aren't. And as families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Find people who don't have holiday plans and start a new tradition.

Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

Stick to a budget. Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Try these alternatives:

- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
- Give homemade gifts.
- Start a family gift exchange.



Turkey Safety

If you're responsible for the Thanksgiving feast, it's probably the largest meal you'll cook all year. Before you get started, review these turkey food safety tips, so in the chaos of the day, you'll take the right precautions with raw poultry.

Safely thaw your turkey: Thaw turkeys in the refrigerator, in a sink of cold water that is changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave. Never thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. A frozen turkey is safe indefinitely, but a thawing turkey must defrost at a safe temperature.

Safely handle your turkey: Raw poultry can contaminate anything it touches with harmful bacteria. Keep the turkey separate from other prepared foods and thoroughly clean your work space after putting the turkey in the oven.

Safely stuff your turkey: Cooking stuffing in a casserole dish makes it easy to make sure it is thoroughly cooked. But if you put stuffing in the turkey, do so **just before** cooking. Make sure all harmful bacteria are gone by using a food thermometer – the stuffing's center should reach 165°F. Wait 20 minutes after removing the bird from the oven before removing the stuffing; this allows it to cook a little more.

Safely cook your turkey: The oven should be set to at least 325°F. Cooking times will vary depending on the weight of the turkey. To make sure the turkey has reached a safe internal temperature of 165°F, insert a food thermometer into the center of the stuffing and the thickest portions of the breast, thigh, and wing. Let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing the stuffing and carving the meat.

Adapted from [CDC](#)

Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. In addition to making sure you have enough time for everything, this will help keep you from feeling that there are a dozen other things you should be doing instead. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every activity. If it's not possible to say no to certain obligations, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

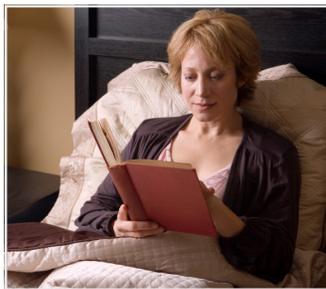
Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Incorporate regular physical activity into each day.
- Get enough sleep! Feeling overtired will add to your stress levels.

Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Some options may include:

- Taking a walk at night and stargazing.
- Listening to soothing music.
- Getting a massage.
- Reading a book.
- Meditating. Several free apps offer guided meditations.



Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Adapted from [The Mayo Clinic](#)



Recipe of the Month:

Bulgur Stuffing with Dried Cranberries & Hazelnuts

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cups chopped onions, (2 large)
- 1 cup chopped celery, (2-3 stalks)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 cups bulgur, rinsed
- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ teaspoon salt, or to taste
- ⅔ cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup orange juice
- ⅔ cup chopped hazelnuts, (2 ounces)
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Instructions

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onions and celery; cook, stirring often, until softened, 5 to 8 minutes. Add garlic, cinnamon and allspice; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add bulgur and stir for a few seconds. Add broth, bay leaf and salt; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until the bulgur is tender and liquid has been absorbed, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine dried cranberries and orange juice in a small microwave-safe bowl. Cover with vented plastic wrap and microwave on high for 2 minutes. Set aside to plump.

Toast hazelnuts in a small dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until light golden and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. When the bulgur is ready, discard the bay leaf. Add the cranberries, toasted hazelnuts, parsley and pepper; fluff with a fork.

Nutrition per 3/4 cup serving (serves 10):

Calories: 193; Fat: 5g; Saturated Fat: 1g; Fiber: 6g; Carbohydrates: 33g; Protein: 6g; Sodium: 241mg; Sugars: 7g

Adapted from [Eating Well](#)