
Guest Column: Holiday Stress Busters

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41% of those polled are stressed by the holidays. Fortunately, there are many ways to bust holiday stress.

Set realistic goals. Your expectations should correspond to your circumstances, time, and money. Don't try to outdo family and friends. You don't have to impress anyone.

A wonderful holiday season doesn't have to be expensive. Set a manageable budget and stick to it. Determine before you go shopping how much you will spend on food and presents. Entertaining doesn't have to cost a lot. Sumptuous meals can be prepared without expensive ingredients. Use your imagination and creativity.

If there are lots of people on your gift list, contact them and agree to a maximum cost for each gift. They will probably appreciate a pre-set spending limit as much as you will. Consider making your own gifts, such as baked goods or crafts.

A variety of free or low-cost activities are available. Many communities provide holiday programs such as parades and winter carnivals. Informal gatherings with friends and family can be lots of fun without obligating anyone to host a big party.

Accept relatives and friends for who they are. Put aside differences; don't try to resolve them during gatherings. Bringing up past issues will not add to the seasonal joy.

Divorced parents need to be extra sensitive to their children's emotions. Make children's needs a priority and avoid using them as pawns. Children want to spend time with both of their parents so work together to facilitate reciprocal visitation.

If you are hosting a meal or party, ask each guest to bring a dish. Delegate responsibilities to your spouse and children. Everyone will feel included and no one has to carry the full load.

Don't snap at others. Have rules and guidelines for older children returning home for the holidays. Ask guests to supervise their children if they get too rambunctious.

Plan ahead for what you want to accomplish before the holiday rush starts. You can pace yourself if you have enough time. Spreading out activities leaves you calmer and more relaxed.

Prioritize what you want to accomplish. Organize your time to allow for the most important tasks. Say no to requests that don't fit your plans. Be flexible.

Make time for yourself. Maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating properly, exercising, and getting enough sleep.

It's normal and ok to feel sad during the holidays. Life is unpredictable and brings many changes. Don't compare today with the good old days from your past. Take charge of your life. Don't act like a victim. Spend time with supportive and caring people. Help others by volunteering. Whenever you bring a smile to someone's face, you will feel better too.

Make realistic resolutions. Set goals you can accomplish. Don't abandon your resolutions after a few weeks. After the holidays, actively working towards your goals will keep you positive and focused on the good in life.

Bryan is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits." Contact Bryan at Bryan@columnist.com or visit www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com Copyright 2021 Bryan Golden