













EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips on managing stress during the festive season

For some of us, the Christmas season might bring unwelcome stress. And it's no wonder considering the demands of parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining. But with some practical tips, you may be able to minimise the stress and even end up enjoying the holidays!

-  **Acknowledge your feelings.** This time of year may highlight loss and unexpected changes. It's normal to feel sadness or grief and it's OK to take time to express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
-  **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, connecting or volunteering with community, religious or other social events may offer support, companionship and lift your spirits.
-  **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. Families change and grow, traditions and rituals may change as well; be open to creating new rituals.
-  **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed chances are they're also feeling the effects of holiday stress.
-  **Stick to a budget.** Before shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend and stick to your budget. Happiness can't be bought with an avalanche of gifts.
-  **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for activities. Plan your menus and shopping list so as to avoid last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten items. And enlist help for party preparation and clean-up.
-  **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. People can be understanding if you can't participate. If it's not possible to say no try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.
-  **Keep up healthy habits.** Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Try a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on treat food and drinks. Get plenty of sleep and incorporate regular physical activity into each day.
-  **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.
-  **Seek professional help if needed.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed, irritable and hopeless or plagued by physical complaints, not being able to sleep, or unable to face routine chores. If these symptoms persist, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au