

5 Ways To Relieve Holiday Stress

The holiday stress test: (Circle 1 for never- 2 seldom - 3 occasionally - 4 often and 5 almost always)

Do you find the holiday season to be stressful?	1	2	3	4	5
Does the family have different expectations about celebrating the holidays than you do	1	2	3	4	5
Does the family expect more expensive presents than you feel you can afford	1	2	3	4	5
Have you ever had a holiday that didn't go as well as you had imagined	1	2	3	4	5
Do you worry about it happening again	1	2	3	4	5
Do you worry about buying someone a gift they won't like	1	2	3	4	5
If you have to go out over the holidays, do you worry about what to wear	1	2	3	4	5
If people are coming to your home do you worry about it not being festive enough	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel obligated to travel and visit others during the season	1	2	3	4	5
Do the holidays not seem to be as much fun as they were when you were young	1	2	3	4	5

Total your score:

If you scored

- 10 – 20 You should worry about being too well balanced, it's not normal or you are not being completely truthful and Santa will know.
- 20 – 30 You either starred as the mother on a TV show from the fifties or you will produce the holiday that every one will fondly remember for years.
- 30 – 40 Unfortunately you are about normal but there is home and the rest of the article should have some great tips for you this season.

40 – 50 I'm glad we caught up to you before you downed the rum cake and under the influence of sugar and alcohol streaked naked through the mall screaming, "I can't take anymore!"

This accuracy of this survey is plus or minus 5%, 19 times out of 20 maybe, but I wouldn't let it worry you, unless you truly do not have anything else to worry about. The whole point of this exercise is to prepare your mind to make a positive change from one of worry to one of enjoyment this holiday season.

"Stress is created in our mind when our reality does not equal our expectations." - Layton Park

Stress is not necessarily a bad thing, it has motivated a number of people do accomplish great things.

The measurement of whether stress is healthy or not, is whether it is caused by a desire for success or simply to survive. If you have lost that happy holiday feeling try these five tips this year.

1. Start planning this season as a family and review everyone's expectations. Be honest, if you don't have \$4,000 in the budget for a new GPS (global Positioning System) for Dad's car, give him a list of maps you might be prepared to buy him. The joy of Christmas quickly dims when the child discovers the expensive presents don't perform the way they did in the perfect Christmas ads and you still have fifteen payments left.
2. Make shopping an adventure to be savoured not endured. Only go during slower times, when everyone is well rested. Start early in the season so you can take your time, don't hurry and target only a couple of people to buy for at a time. There is nothing more frustrating than having a list of fifty-six people and twenty minutes to buy them something before the store closes.
3. Better than shopping for gifts take the time to teach your children how to make gifts and give presents you have made yourself. Teach children the joy of giving and remember that smaller is often better. A small piece of art made by you will be treasured long after the warranty expired on traditional presents which expire just two days before the actual gift does.
4. Learn to say "No" early, especially if you are not wanting to travel during the holidays. We spent a few Christmas's with just our immediate family alone in our motor home, with no TV, radio or any other outside distractions, much to the disappointment of our families that thought we should have traveled to spend Christmas with them. Our children learned that you can play card games without a computer and now years later fondly remember these times, although they have long forgotten the presents they received.
5. We measure the value of our friends by how comfortable they feel when they show up unannounced at our home, no matter how unorganized it is and are happy to share in what ever we have on the table. In fact this is how some family rituals begin. We had an aunt and uncle that showed up at our door for cards and laughter every Christmas eve for about twenty years. I still think of them fondly.

This holiday season remember that the best gift of all is laughter. Make those you love laugh and remember it is contagious so let them hear your laughter first. Make sure one of the gifts you share with those you love is a hug. Give you self ten minutes alone to just sit under the stars and stare into the heavens as you quietly contemplate how truly thankful we should be. If those thoughts are interrupted by a worry that something did not get done write then give it the acid test and ask yourself, "Will it make a difference twenty years from now?" The answer to your child not getting the latest greatest toy will be no, the answer to your child knowing they are truly loved is yes."

Have a very memorable holiday season.

Myrna Park