

## Your Health & Safety Matters!

### Understanding Holiday Stress



The winter holiday season, with celebrations such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and Thanksgiving, for most people is a fun time of the year filled with parties and social gatherings with family and friends. But for many people, it is a time filled with sadness, self-reflection, loneliness, and anxiety.

Here are the **Top 11** things that Americans dread about Holidays, according to a survey by the Consumer Reports National Research Center:

- 68%:** Crowds and long lines
- 37%:** Gaining weight
- 37%:** Getting into debt
- 28%:** Gift shopping
- 25%:** Traveling
- 24%:** Seeing certain relatives
- 23%:** Seasonal music
- 19%:** Disappointing gifts
- 16%:** Having to attend holiday parties or events
- 15%:** Having to be nice
- 12%:** Holiday tipping

With holiday family reunions looming in your calendar, what are some ways that you can prepare yourself and cope better this season? We turned to the experts for some tips on beating holiday stress and anxiety.

## Key Points

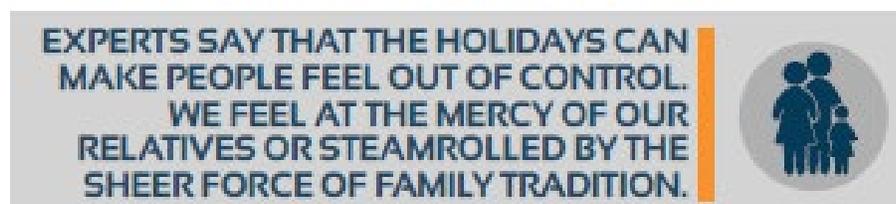
- Holiday stress has a particular impact on women, who take charge of many of the holiday celebrations, particularly the tasks related to preparing meals and decorating the home.



- Women are more likely than men to report an increase of stress during the holiday season. In addition, they have a harder time relaxing during the holidays and are more likely to fall into bad habits to manage their stress, like comfort eating.
- Workplace stress does not disappear. Although time off work is an important highlight of the holidays, people worry about getting enough time off of work and that work responsibilities might interfere with time spent with the family.



- Lower middle-income people in the United States feel a financial crunch around the holidays. The struggle to afford and to purchase material goods is particularly acute for this group. Lower middle-income individuals feel the pressure of commercialism and hype during the holidays, as well as the financial worries of being able to afford the holidays without running up credit card debt.



- The leading holiday stressors are time (67 percent often or sometimes), money (62 percent often or sometimes), and commercialism or hype (53 percent often or sometimes). In contrast, work and money are leading stressors during the regular year.

## Holiday Celebrations and Covid-19

As we approach the fall and winter holiday season, how can you plan festivities and still protect your guests, family and the community during COVID-19? The CDC offers [suggestions](#) to supplement local and state regulations that are in place.



Different types of celebrations hold different risks of spreading the virus. Holding a holiday event with members of your own household poses a low risk. Holding a large party in an indoor place with people who have flown in from across the country is a high-risk celebration. Here are things to consider:

- **What is the infection rate in your community and in the community from which your guests are traveling?** Before you decide whether to host a holiday celebration, determine the current levels of COVID-19 in your area.
- **Is anyone in your household or on your guest list at higher risk?** Navigating the holidays means looking out for everyone's health. While you may not be at high risk for COVID-19 complications, consider all of the people who live in your home or might be at your event.
- **What about event logistics?** The safest location for a celebration is outdoors, where ventilation is better and it's easier to socially distance. If you are attending or hosting an indoor event, limit the number of guests. Keep windows open to increase air flow. If you are at an indoor activity, avoid crowds and close contact – people tend to gather in the kitchen. Serve individual plates or pre-packaged items, or ask guests to bring their own food. Set up separate seating areas to keep people 6 feet apart. Have extra masks and hand sanitizer on hand, and keep your party shorter.
- **Has anyone in your household been sick?** You or members of your household should not host a celebration if you have symptoms of COVID-19, are awaiting test results, may have been exposed to the virus in the last 14 days, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have not met the criteria for when it is safe to be [around others](#).

Any gathering can spread germs so be sure to get your flu shot before the holiday bustle begins. Getting a flu vaccine is essential to protecting your health and the health of your families, colleagues and friends. Have a safe holiday season.

## **Holiday Stress – Tisn't The Season To Be Stressed Out**

'The first step to a 'stress-less' holiday is to determine your most important goal for the season,' explains stress and wellness expert, Beverly Beuermann-King, who delivers stress workshops to companies across the country.

Stop, relax and start doing some planning. Relinquish those activities that have lost meaning or complicate your life. Get back to the basics and simplify.

Spending weeks or months finding the perfect gift for that special someone can be a waste of time. 'There is no such thing as the perfect gift,' says Beuermann-King. 'Bring back the meaning of the holidays by simply showing people you appreciate them. Ask for suggestions. It doesn't have to be the most unique or expensive gift to make a lasting impression.'

As you are out and about this holiday season and anxiety starts to build as you're waiting in the long line-ups in the stores, try deep breathing to calm yourself down, Beuermann-King suggests.

Don't be afraid to alter tradition. 'Try simplifying things,' suggests Beuermann-King. 'Instead of a 15-course meal with you doing six hours of dishes, try using paper plates or asking your guests to bring a dish.'

'Tradition says we should spend time with our families, but if you don't like your family you shouldn't be spending time with them during the holidays,' said Beuermann-King. 'Find traditions that add purpose to your life and get rid of those that don't.'

Most of all, make sure to take care of yourself by resting well, eating a balanced diet and spending time with the people who make you happy.

***The holidays are, first and foremost, a joyful time.***

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