



## Holiday Stress

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Due to the intensified focus on family, work, and money, the holidays can be a stressful time for many people. Therefore, it is imperative that experts in the health field address issues like holiday stress and it is also imperative that Americans find healthy ways to deal with holiday stress. Research shows that unhealthy behaviors people use to manage stress can contribute to some of the country's biggest health problems such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

What's stressing you out this holiday season? According to a survey done by the American Psychological Association (APA), 61% of Americans listed money as the number one stressor. Another 42% listed the pressures of gift giving as next, 34% lack of time, and lastly 23% listed credit card debt. This same survey showed that 81% of younger Americans are more worried about lack of money and 54% are more worried about gift giving compared to people over the age of 35. Everyone responds to their stress in some way, so the key is to handle stress in a way that it doesn't make things worse.

This survey also showed varied ways people are dealing with holiday stress. One in five Americans stated that this type of stress can affect their physical health. Thirty-six percent of them surveyed said that they either eat (22%) or drink (14%) to cope with holiday stress. There were some who relied on exercise (45%) and religious and spiritual activities (44%) to relieve stress. Still yet, a small percentage of Americans surveyed stated that they turn to massages and yoga for relief of stress. So, as a result, it appears that how most people deal with holiday stress is that they turn to what they know—and ironically, the things that make them feel good instantaneously, like food or drink, can be dire for them in the long run.

The APA survey also illuminates the difference in how stress can affect men and women. Accordingly, it found that women are more likely than men to report heightened stress levels during the holiday season, and that they are less likely to take time to relax or manage that stress in healthy ways.

Therefore, here are some tips recommended by the APA for managing holiday stress:

- Define holiday stress....How do you experience stress? Does that experience change during the holidays?
- Identify holiday stressors....What holiday events or situations trigger stressful feelings?

- Recognize how you deal with stress....Determine if you are relying on unhealthy behaviors like smoking or eating to manage stress.
- Change one behavior at a time....Unhealthy behaviors develop over the course of time. Replacing unhealthy behaviors with healthy ones requires time.
- Ask for support....Accepting help from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens your resilience and ability to manage stress.

Lastly, if you are experiencing stress because of the holidays, remain positive and utilize the tips listed above to deal with holiday stress and build resilience. Additionally, don't forget to set realistic goals, keep things in perspective, take decisive actions and always take care of yourself because this keeps your mind and body primed to deal with stressful situations.

[www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=149/67](http://www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=149/67)

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