

Get Mentally Ready for the Holidays



Many Americans look forward to the joys of the holiday season. However, eight out of 10 find the extra demands that the holidays bring to be stressful, according to the American Psychological Association.

So whether you'll soon be celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, take some time now to prepare for the busy season ahead. It can help keep you from feeling overwhelmed.

Reduce Your Stress

Do as much as you can ahead of time, such as:

- ✓ **Purchase presents** – try to get an early start on wrapping them, too
- ✓ **Make a plan** – it should include events, parties, gifts needed, cookies and other seasonal treats you plan to prepare, and other family responsibilities
- ✓ **Simplify your celebration** – for example, decide in advance whether you have the time and energy to host a holiday get-together
- ✓ **Focus on the true meaning of your holiday** – chances are it's more than giving or receiving expensive gifts
- ✓ **Reduce your holiday card list** – or send cards through email, which is free and faster

Anticipate Grief

If you've lost a loved one, the holidays can seem even more stressful and lonely, especially if it's your first year without him or her. Try these tips to anticipate your feelings and prepare now to help ease your grief throughout the season:

- ✓ **Decide which holiday celebrations to attend** – choose those where you are likely to feel cared for emotionally and compassionately
- ✓ **Honor your loved one** – make a charitable donation in your loved one's name or set a place at the table with a favorite photo to signify his or her presence
- ✓ **Acknowledge your loss** – take time to reminisce with family and friends about your holiday memories with your loved one
- ✓ **Be kind to yourself** – realize there is no right or wrong way to grieve during the holidays