



For many, Christmas is the season of stress. There are just so many things to do, and a limited time to do them in. Working people may feel especially harassed, trying to fit Christmas activities into their limited time. This year, in particular, in uncertain times and recession, the commercial aspect of Christmas might seem especially difficult.

Often part of the problem is the large discrepancy between 'expectations' and reality. This time of year is '*supposed*' to be joyous, perfect, celebratory.....but with all the shopping, Christmas parties, and holiday get-togethers, it can be an extremely stressful time of year, and can bring a sense of dread to many people. Overwork, fatigue, financial stress, family tensions, bad weather, possible weight gain, unrealistic expectations can all lead to anxiety. Throw over-excited children into the mix, who have weeks off school at home and the situation can spiral out of control. The emphasis on families, while it can be positive, can also be stressful. Even if you have the ideal family(!), tensions or arguments can erupt as everyone tries to be on their best behaviour. If you like your independence, just being around one's relatives can lead to feelings of stress. And many people struggle because they are not able to be with family or friends, through death or separation.

Learning and applying a few time management strategies can make a big difference.

Re-assessing your values and priorities for Christmas can help keep it in a manageable perspective.

Tips for Reducing Christmas Stress

- ☆ **Slow down**
 - Take a long hot bath
 - Get enough sleep
 - When you make yourself that cup of tea, sit down to drink it
- ☆ **Work out a realistic budget**
 - You cannot buy an ideal Christmas
 - Think of budget ideas e.g. Wrap an 'IOU' note for a delayed present in the sales
- ☆ **Build time to relax and enjoy the festive season into your schedule**
 - Take the time to drive or walk around and enjoy the displays of Christmas lights in shops or on houses. Don't plan to do shopping on this trip - just look at what is around you.
- ☆ **Have 'alone time'**
 - Even 15 minutes alone can make all the difference. Take a walk, listen to calming music. Put Christmas and other such family holidays in perspective.
- ☆ **Stay Active**
 - Getting enough exercise, oxygen, and fresh air may help. If you don't have the energy for anything too challenging, simply go for a walk for 15 minutes.
- ☆ **Ask for help**
 - Christmas anxiety will be easier to overcome when you don't feel like you're in it alone. Assign some tasks to other family members. Write a 'to do' list and then put people's names, including your children's names, next to that job. Learning to delegate teaches everyone responsibility and it takes away your sense of feeling overwhelmed.
- ☆ **Accept imperfections**
 - The family will fight, the gifts will disappoint, and the turkey will be dry. It's inevitable that some troubles will arise; accepting this is part of life is key to overcoming Christmas stress.
- ☆ **Parties and Gatherings**
 - It is okay to not attend *every* party and gathering
- ☆ **Turn chores into events**
 - Everyone finds some holiday season activities that have to be done drudgery. For example, invite some friends over for a tree-decorating night or Christmas baking night

