Holiday stress blasters

The holidays should be a time for fun with friends and family. But for those trying to juggle work and home with presents and parties; it can be one of the most taxing times of the year. Avoid feeling snowed in by the season, and clear some time from the hectic holiday schedule to take in the tips below.



Be realistic. A romanticized vision of the "perfect" holiday with your "perfect" family is sure to disappoint. Embrace the fact that stress and minor conflict go hand-in-hand with the joy and fun of the season. Relax and accept the imperfections in yourself and your family.

Start sooner rather than later. Set aside a little time every day to prepare for the holidays. Spacing out errands will help ease the pressure and reduce the likelihood of last-minute panic situations.

Just say "no." During the holidays, work, personal and family obligations can wreak havoc on your daily routine, cut into your free time and leave you feeling overwhelmed. Be selective and say "yes" only to invitations you really want to attend. Send a card to those you decline and if you're concerned about offending the host, a small gift for guests to enjoy such as flowers, wine or food.

Ask and you will receive. Recruit the support of other family members. Just because they're not volunteering, doesn't mean they don't want to help. Children especially enjoy being part of the action. Younger kids can make cards, decorate or tidy up while older children can help with gift-wrapping, food preparation and other errands.

Stick to your budget. It's not hard to get caught up in the flurry of holiday spending, but once the sparkle of the holidays is over, you could be left with a very real bill. Avoid starting the New Year in the red. Draw up a realistic budget for the season and honour it.

Stay healthy. It's easy to let healthy eating and exercise fall to the wayside during this indulgent time. Make an effort to get enough sleep, limit consumption of alcohol and fatty foods and squeeze in physical activity whenever possible. Being well rested and healthy will help you cope better with stress.

Enjoy the ride. Concentrating on "the big day" can take away from the fun of getting there. Take pleasure in the here and now of planning, preparation and time spent with family and friends on the way to the holiday.

Be careful not to let the true spirit of joy and togetherness of the holidays get lost in the shuffle of a busy schedule. Relax and take care of yourself and the season will be a more festive one for everyone.