

## **Ho-Ho-Hold the Holiday Stress**

Many people have a love-hate relationship with the holidays. Sure, the dinner parties with family and friends are a lot of fun, but as your calendar fills up and the to-do lists grow longer, it can be hard to savour all of the moments this time of year brings. Here's your guide to getting through the holidays while staying happy, healthy and stress-free.

### **Make a list, check it twice**

Get ahead of the holiday chaos by making lists of your priorities. Not only will this help you feel in control, it will help prevent last-minute scrambling so you can make the most of the holiday season. With a second wave of COVID-19 upon us, consider doing the majority of your shopping online instead of heading to overcrowded malls. Think about how great you'll feel if you get your gift shopping done before mid-December – not only will you get the best selection of products, but you'll gain some extra "me time" when everyone else is running around last minute.

### **Do less, enjoy more**

Accept that there are only 24 hours in a day and practice smart time management. Learn to say "no" by declining some invitations or shortening the length of visits. Think quality, not quantity. Make sure to set aside some fun activities for the immediate family, too! Try ice-skating, a night of board games or your favourite holiday movie.

### **Create new traditions**

If doing something just because that's the way it's always been done is stressing you out, consider inventing a new tradition that works better. This is especially important to consider during the COVID-19 pandemic. With current COVID-19 protocols, maintaining a tradition such as the annual large family dinner may be restricted. Create new ways to find meaning.

### **Keep moving**

Don't let your exercise routine take a back seat during the holidays. Exercise can help act as a stress-reliever and provide a distraction from your worries. Aim for 30 to 45 minutes, three to four times a week. Even just getting outside for some fresh, crisp air and a walk in the sunshine can do wonders to lift your mood.

### **Practice gratitude**

We can't always control the circumstances around us (too many commitments, sick kids at home, in-laws staying at your place over the holidays), but we can control how we view those situations. There are going to be days when things can feel stressful and overwhelming, but there is always something – no matter how small it is – that we can be grateful for. Despite the chaos of the holiday season, take a moment at the end of each day and acknowledge something positive and specific that brought a moment of joy to your day.

### **Put yourself on your priority list**

Set aside some “me” time to do something that you love. Enjoy your favourite hobby, take a bath or go for a manicure. Use this time to take care of yourself in whichever way you choose. Giving your mind and body a break from the stresses will give you a chance to relax and recharge.

### **Get a good night's rest**

We've said it before and we'll say it again: sleep is vital to your health and well-being. This holds true especially during times of heightened stress. Aim for seven to nine hours of restful sleep each night. Keep in mind it's not just the amount of sleep that's important – you also need to establish regular sleeping hours. Go to bed and wake up at approximately the same time each day, including weekends.

### **Stay healthy, but enjoy your food too**

A lot of people stress about their diets around the holidays because it's so easy to over-do it with all the parties and extra treats lying around. There's nothing wrong with watching your waistline, but sometimes that can cause a lot of stress too. If you really enjoy egg nog, or can't resist a slice of your grandmother's homemade pecan pie for dessert, don't knock yourself out over it. Life is too short not to enjoy some indulgences this holiday season.