Tips for Post-Holiday Stress Management

By Mary Clare Sheridan, MS

When the holidays come to an end, we face short days, long nights and a stress level that’s likely to increase. Here are hints to help reduce the impact:

**Be human** — Don’t try to be the “super” man or woman. Accept that you are only human. Deal with stress overload by stopping. When the excitement ends, it’s natural to feel some letdown. Let it happen. Later, if feelings of overload continue, evaluate the situation. Decide what needs to be done immediately and what can wait. Seek assistance, if needed. Reward yourself regularly for the good job you do!

Therefore, enjoy the holidays. When they are over, take time to take care of you. Treat yourself well, and follow this simple recipe for healthy day-to-day stress management. Once the post-holiday period has passed, you will be ready to begin the new season in a positive frame of mind. Remember, if you find the pressures greater than you can handle, don’t fret. Your EAP is there for you, 24-7 to speak to a counselor or set an appointment call 402-330-0960 or 800-922-7379.

**Give yourself a refill** — Try relaxing, deep-breathing exercises to reverse the shallow breathing we often use in stressful situations.

**Broaden yourself** — Learn a new skill, take up a hobby or visit a new place in town to open up different pursuits and cultivate new friendships.

**Reach out to someone** — High stress can cause one to focus too much internally. Consider volunteering at church or in the community to help you focus on others.

**Use positive self-talk** — How do you talk to yourself? What underlying messages do you send? If they are negative, turn them into positive, powerful self-talk.

**Please release me** — We can get so worked up over things that we push ourselves too hard and upset our emotional balance. Ask yourself if it’s worth the upset. “What can I do about it?” Your answer can help you release anxiety and feel more relaxed and energized.

**A laugh a day** — Nothing can replace the importance of humor in your life. If you can see the lighter side of situations during stressful times, it can become easier to maintain balance.

*“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”*  
Philosopher William James, 1897
Parents of teens have one of the toughest jobs around. The dynamic between you and your son/daughter changes so quickly that it’s a real challenge to stay focused on your job description. You knew very well what the job entailed when the kids were younger; however, now it’s not always so clear. There’s no single golden rule book for parenting. However, keeping these 10 tips in mind can go a long way in helping you stay centered, and that’s exactly where you must be to serve as an effective parent and role model for your teens.

1. **Remember: You are the parent.** Your job is to protect your child and prepare him/her to become a fully functioning adult. Being a leader and compassionate teacher is more important than being your teen’s friend.

2. **Stay calm.** Nothing will get resolved when stress makes it impossible to think clearly. Can’t respond rationally? Take a break until you can.

3. **Talk less, listen more.** Just like the rest of us, teens want to be respected and heard. Be a “safe” and available person to talk to.

4. **It’s a balancing act.** A key challenge in parenting teens is to remain emotionally connected while granting your kids more privacy and autonomy.

5. **They’re always watching.** Want your teen to be trustworthy, responsible, compassionate? Make sure you model those values in your own life.

6. **Make your expectations clear and be consistent in your follow-through.** If your kids know the consequences ahead of time, and they’ve bought into the rules of the house, they’re more likely to make healthy choices.

7. **Catch your teen in the act of doing something right.** Praise shows that you noticed their efforts and promotes a feeling of competency for your teen.

8. **Be real.** Father/mother does not always know best. Admit your own conflicts and mistakes. Apologize when appropriate. Show your kids that, just like them, you are also “a work in progress.”

9. **Regularly make time to enjoy being a family.** Have regular meals together and relax, unplugged from digital technology. It is a gift with long-lasting benefits.

10. **Lighten up!** Humor is a great de-stressor. Remember, no one stays a teenager (or the parent of a teen) forever!

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