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Whether your holiday stress is caused by Christmas, Hanukkah or New Year's Eve, there are ways to ease the pressure so you can actually enjoy the holiday.

Here are 10 tips for Happier Holidays. (P.S. They also work all year round).

**1. Hide:** It works nearly every time. If you need a little break, admit it and seek refuge. Go to a private place and take a few long deep breaths.

**2. Rehearse the worst;** then, if it happens, you've already made advance preparations. And, since the worst seldom happens, you can make a game out of what does.

**3. Get organized early.** List all your holiday chores: cards, if you send them; decorating the house; buying gifts; special cooking; wrapping presents; mailing; and food shopping. Just listing everything you have to do will help you to feel less harried. Set a schedule, and do a little every day. Check items off your list as you complete them. Remember, procrastination is the real "Grinch" who stole Christmas.

**4. Get everyone in the house to help.** Share the fun, share the duties.

**5. Use modern innovations to make your traditions easier.** Say you have five dozen cookies to send in for the school party. Put the family recipes aside and buy a tube of ready-mix cookie dough, and cook them two minutes less than the directions say (it makes them chewy), put some sprinkles on them and swear the children to secrecy.

**6. Use moderation in eating, drinking and spending.** You don't want a head, belt or debt hangover.

**7. Empathy works when you think the world is out to get you.** Look around. There are undoubtedly others who are worse off. If you see someone struggling, offer to help, if appropriate.

**8. QTIP:** The next time you're in a holiday traffic jam or stuck in a checkout line where a customer is arguing with the cashier over coupons, remember QTIP — quit taking it personally. The checkout line isn't there to drive you crazy. The stoplight is not a part of a plan to ruin your day. Don't get upset about what is beyond your control.

**9. Contrarian shoppers start early and end early.** Take an early lunch and shop on off-days at the mall. Have a detailed list of gifts with alternates if your first choice isn't available. Consider shopping year round for the holidays. Often, summer sales mean better gifts at a lower price next year.

**10. The Chemistry of Joy will see you through.** It is a chemical reaction caused by signals our brain gives to our autonomic nervous system. A positive, happy outlook triggers immune strengthening responses in our body. Laugh, enjoy humor, sing, and think about the joy you give to others and the joy that others give you.

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