

### **By Mark Underwood**

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The holidays are a festive time of year, but many people feel too stressed to enjoy the season. They may have too many deadlines, too much shopping to do, or they are juggling too many holiday-related things and not getting enough sleep.

People often place enormous burdens on themselves by trying to get things “just right.” So what can you do to lose the stress before and during the holidays? Plenty. But you have to start by making a commitment to be less stressed and have more fun this year.

#### **Start with a Game Plan**

If you are a chronic worrier, you know what it’s like to focus on things that are out of your control. But worries can lead to fear, tension, anxiety, anger, and exhaustion.

It’s time to come up with a holiday de-stress plan that suits your lifestyle. It’s important to prioritize your own needs over everyone else’s desires. At the top of your new stress-free plan tell yourself you are going to “limit” the amount of stress you will accept in your life. You may be surprised how much better you feel when you set limits.

Include a budget so you can keep holiday purchases in check. When holiday spending gets out of control, stress is going to follow.

Next, triage holiday stress-filled events. Triage means to prioritize, so take care of the most important issues first, which are often the most stressful.

Be realistic. Take the pressure of trying to make everything perfect off yourself. Perfectionism is a common source of stress. Be clear about your expectations then make sure you celebrate the season without taxing yourself unnecessarily.

There is no better time than now to create a game plan that can help you worry less and change your life before, during, and after the holidays.

#### **Better Sleep, Less Stress**

Do you toss and turn and have trouble sleeping at night? You may have difficulty sleeping if your day is crowded with anxiety and stress.

A recent study by the National Sleep Foundation found that as many as one-in-six Americans is at risk for losing sleep this year due to holiday-related stress.

Did you know that poor sleep can lead to health problems? Studies have shown that when you don’t get quality sleep night after night, it can affect your immune system. Many sleep studies have discovered that how you sleep and rest are directly linked to your well-being and daily health.

Research has shown that sleep is not just good for the body, but is also of vital importance for the brain. Avoid overloading your daily life with tasks and stress. Take these steps for reducing fatigue and stress.

#### **Holiday De-stress Tips**

Try to keep a positive attitude. Focus on the good things going on in your life. When you reflect on things you’re grateful for and small successes of daily life, you’ll feel more in control when stress-filled circumstances arise.

Write down your concerns. Journal what worries you. It may help pinpoint the real core of some problems so you can work on them more objectively.

Take time out for you. Prioritize doing things you enjoy like getting together with a favorite friend for coffee.

Take one day at a time. Focus on making the most of the present.

Keep busy. If you have too much time to worry about tomorrow, you'll feel like this. George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright and co-founder of the London School of Economics, said, "The secret of being miserable is to have the leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not."