

Tips for overcoming holiday anxiety and stress.

Experts say that the holidays can make people feel out of control. We feel at the mercy of our relatives or steamrolled by the sheer force of family tradition. But you have a say. The key is to take some control over the holidays, instead of letting them control you.

“Ask yourself, ‘Why am I doing things that make me miserable?’” Duckworth tells WebMD. “Think about the reasons.” He suggests that you draw up a list of reasons why you engage in these holiday traditions, and then a list of reasons why you shouldn’t. Just making a simple pro and con list will remind you that you do have a choice.

Changing Your Outlook

The next step is to challenge some of your assumptions. If you enjoyed the holidays differently this year, what would happen? What if you didn’t go to your aunt’s for dinner? What if you didn’t bring the poinsettias to your grandfather’s grave?

Your gut feeling might be: Calamity! Disaster! But get past that initial reaction. Think about what would really happen. Maybe your aunt would be annoyed. Is that really such a big deal? Could you make it up to her later with a brunch in February?

The key is to be conscious about what you’re doing. This holiday season, don’t unthinkingly do things the same way just because that’s how you always do them. If the old holiday traditions aren’t working, if they’re not making you happy and causing holiday stress, it’s time to do something different.

Once you’ve taken a clear look at the holidays -- about what works and what doesn’t -- it’s time to make some changes. Focus on the holiday stresses that you can control. That includes making different plans and changing your responses to situations. Here are four key don’ts for the holidays.

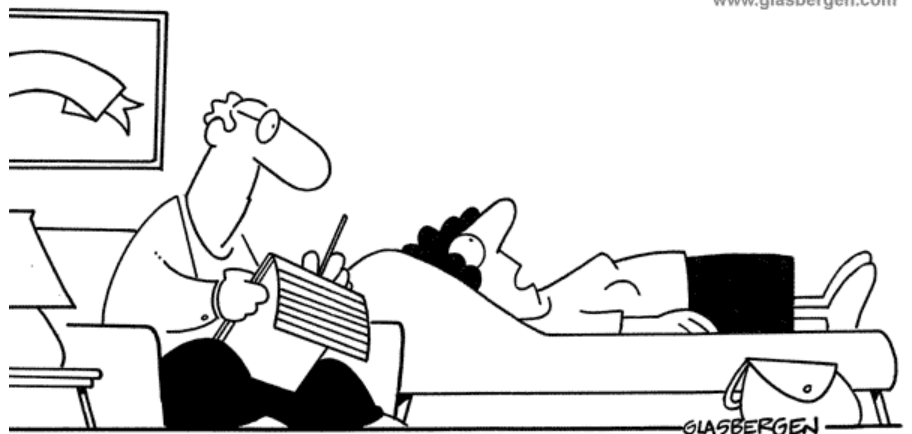
1. Don’t do the same old thing. If the usual family gathering is causing holiday stress, try something else. If you’re too overwhelmed to host, discuss other possibilities with family members.
2. Don’t expect miracles. If your holiday anxiety stems from a deeper history of family conflict, don’t expect that you’ll be able to resolve any big underlying issues now. You may be better off focusing on your own state of mind and confronting difficult issues during a less volatile time of year.
3. Don’t overdo it. To reduce holiday stress, you have to pace yourself. Stay one or two nights at your parents’ house instead of three or four. Plan to drop by the holiday party for a couple of hours instead of staying all night.
4. Don’t worry about how things should be. “There’s a lot of cultural pressure during the holidays,” says Duckworth. “We tend to compare ourselves with these idealized notions of perfect families and perfect holidays.” But in fact, most people

have less than perfect holiday gatherings -- they have family tension, melancholy, and dry turkey too. If you have negative feelings, don’t try to deny them. Remember that there’s nothing wrong or shameful or unusual about feeling down during the holidays.

Source and full article:

<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/features/home-for-the-holidays-stress-tips>

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**“Actually, I only come here to lie down.
I can’t get any rest at home!”**

