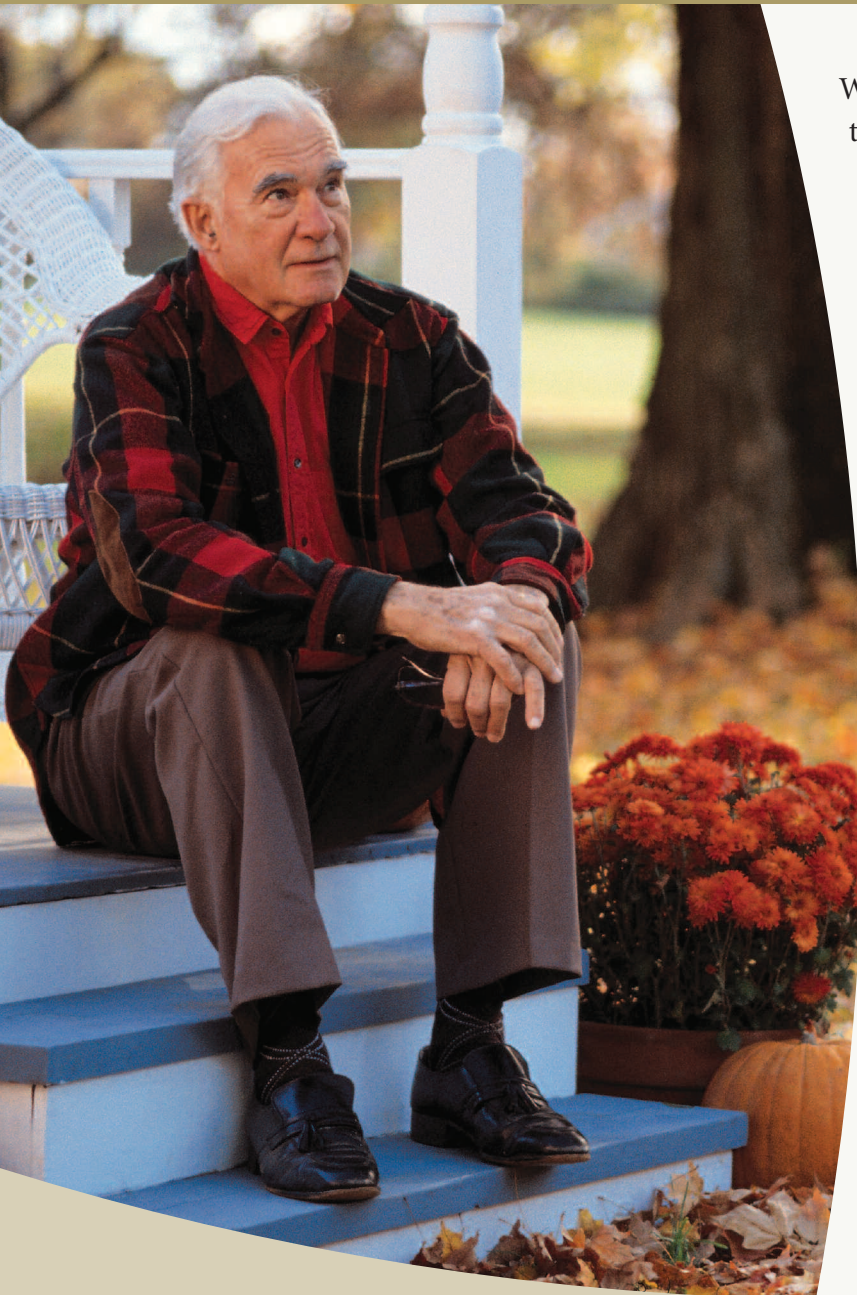


Put peace back into your holidays



While the holidays are supposed to be a peaceful time, they can sometimes be far from that. The season brings more things to do, people to see and places to go. While all these activities might be fun, they also can produce pressure. Unfortunately, trying to handle too many demands may invite unwanted holiday guests—stress and depression.

Holiday stress and depression often result from three major trigger points. Knowing about these triggers can help you prepare to better handle them.

The relationship trigger

Relationships can be challenging at any time, and the holidays can heighten tensions even more. Family conflicts can snowball out of control, especially when you spend more time together. On the other hand, you may experience feelings of isolation and sadness if you are spending the holidays without a loved one.

The financial trigger

Though finances can be an ever-present point of stress, overspending during the holidays can add anxiety. Are you trying to make everyone happy with the perfect gifts?

The demand trigger

Along with your usual schedule, the holidays add shopping, social events and extra food preparations. Stress builds when you are overly tired, setting you up for illness during the holidays.

Holiday stress management tips are available on the next page.



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Insightful ways to joyful holidays



Accept your feelings

If you feel sad or depressed because of holiday stressors, remember that those feelings are common responses to holiday pressures. Keep your expectations realistic and seek support from family members, friends, social clubs or religious groups.

Be flexible

You may want to carry on some traditions, but accept that things may change as family situations change.

Practice forgiveness

Keep in mind that family members and friends aren't perfect, and try to accept them for who they are.

Budget wisely

Plan your budget for gifts, decorations and other items—before you go shopping.

Make a plan

Mark your calendar with the days that you will shop, bake, visit friends and family, and take part in other holiday activities. Plan for travel delays if you're flying or taking a road trip, especially in winter.

Limit saying yes

Give yourself permission to say no to certain seasonal activities. Balancing your time will keep you from feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

Keep healthy habits up

It's okay to enjoy some festive treats and traditional meals, but try not to overdo it. Also, be sure you get plenty of sleep and make time for physical activity.

Take time out

Retreat from the holiday hustle and bustle with a 15-minute break. You'll be recharged to handle items left on your to-do list.