

Feeling Stress over the Holidays?

Take a breath, read these suggestions and get on with your day.

Stress isn't going away especially with the holiday season. Here are a dozen things you can do to lighten the stress load on your mind and body:

Volunteer: Finding meaningful volunteer work helps get you out of your own head and provides feelings of accomplishment.

Take a short drive in your car: Pick a positive, healthy diversion, one that calms you or makes you happy.

Breathe/meditate: Slow deep breathing can help bring on the relaxation response and meditation helps calm the mind. Together they can reduce heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline levels, even skin temperature.

Exercise: This sounds like the opposite of No. 4, but aerobic exercise, strength training and flexibility exercise (such as yoga) let off steam and give you a healthy body better able to handle stress.

Talk nice to yourself: Give yourself credit for the things you've accomplished. It will make you less anxious and more confident.

Pretend: If things seem to be crashing down, act as though they're not. Do this repeatedly to help change your perspective on life's troubles.

Always ask, "What's the worst that can happen?": If the answer isn't death, permanent injury or terminal illness, believe you can get through it.

Unclutter: Organize some part of your physical space, such as your desk, closet or garage.

Talk-and listen-to someone who has your confidence: Find a friend, family member or professional counselor who will talk about handling stress. But you also must be ready to hear the advice.

For additional information or assistance, please contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or consult a Mental Health Professional.

