Unwrapping a Less Stressful Holiday Season

What’s at Stake?

The holiday season often brings two very unwelcomed guests – stress and depression. With increased demands on your time, your wallet, and your patience it can be hard to enjoy the season with family and friends.

What’s the Danger?

In small doses, stress can be powerful. It motivates us to do the things we need to do to survive. However, too much stress can have negative effects on our mental and physical health. And it can certainly ruin the holidays.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are five ways to help lessen holiday stress and depression:

1. **Be realistic.** The holidays don’t have to be perfect to be special. Find ways to celebrate that work for you and your loved ones. Be open to change. Start new traditions.

2. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Keep a calendar and post it where everyone in the household can see it to help everyone know what’s going on.

3. **Stick to a budget.** Decide how much you are going to spend before you hit the stores and stick to it. Talk with other members of your family and discuss spending limits and alternate ideas for spending money on gifts.

4. **Keep up healthy habits.** Don’t forgo exercise, eating healthy and getting plenty of sleep during the holidays. Overindulgence

can add to stress and guilt. Lack of sleep can leave you short-tempered and make it hard to focus on and remember tasks.

5. **Seek help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you could still find yourself having a hard time with stress and suffering with symptoms of depression. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Final Word

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.