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## **Holiday survival**

### **Plan for a stress-free holiday season**

The winter holidays include many welcome aspects of life: fun with family and friends, spiritual celebration, bountiful food and drink, and plenty of warm feelings. However, a busy holiday season can also bring lots of stress if you don't have a plan for managing it.

It's easy to get stretched thin at this festive time of year. Cooking, cleaning, shopping, children's school events, office parties, family gatherings and travel can combine to make the holidays a fairly frenetic period.

One of the keys to enjoying a more relaxing holiday season is to have a plan for the situations that often bring you stress. Keeping your expectations realistic, looking after your own health, and applying limits on what you'll agree to do can be important components of less-stressful holidays.

In this holiday-themed edition of *Compass*, we review:

- Strategies for maintaining better health, balance and serenity during the holidays.
- Ideas on how to overcome common holiday challenges.
- Tips for having more relaxation and less stress this year.

**Log on and learn!** Look for *Holiday Survival* in the Magellan member website under the Library/In the Spotlight section. You'll find information on how to better care for yourself as you celebrate the season.

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### **Finding balance**

The holidays often throw us off kilter because we get so far outside of our usual routines of eating, drinking and socializing. Here are some strategies that can help you stay in balance.

- **Don't be afraid to say no.** Your holiday schedule can quickly become packed if you agree to attend every event—and be everywhere for everyone.
- **Ask for help.** Friends and family members are often quite willing to help you with holiday tasks. Provide specific guidance on what you need them to do.
- **Plan for moderation in eating and drinking.** Eat a healthy snack before holiday parties, alternate drinks of water with other beverages, and take a walk after big meals.
- **Maintain a regular schedule.** Don't skimp on sleep, and try to leave parties early rather than later.
- **Keep up with exercise.** If you have a workout plan (always a good idea!), stay with it faithfully over the holidays. This will help cut stress and burn extra calories.

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## Managing common holiday challenges

Although most people expect joy and celebration to permeate the holiday season, many find keeping up with the annual festive routine somewhat depressing. If this sounds like you, here are ideas for managing some common holiday hurdles differently this year.

### **Don't strive for the "perfect" holidays**

Many of us cling to an image of the ideal holiday season where everyone is relentlessly cheerful. However, perfection is impossible, so we may become disappointed and stressed if things go awry. Instead, have realistic, non-ambitious expectations—and take one day at a time.

### **Create some new traditions**

If the same old family holiday rituals have become a burden for you, try celebrating in new ways. Start early in talking with the family about making positive changes this year, e.g., "Why don't we do a potluck this year instead of expecting Aunt Jill to cook for all of us?"

### **Focus on presence, not presents**

Instead of trying to buy everyone happiness via a truckload of pricey gifts, try to keep things simple; focus more on having fun together. First, establish a budget and stick to it. Set a gift limit or organize a single-item gift exchange. Consider limiting gift-giving to children only.

### **Acknowledge and share your feelings**

If you've lost someone close to you this year, don't try to put on a brave face just for the holidays. Express your grief and sadness to those you trust.

### **Don't revive old conflicts**

Avoid using holiday celebrations to confront others. This isn't the best time for conflict.

### **Allow yourself breaks**

Make an effort to unplug by yourself for short periods of relaxation between holiday tasks or events. This can help you unwind and stay on a healthy track.

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## Stress busting tips for the holidays

Here are some quick and easy tips for beating holiday stress.

- Do most of your shopping online in order to minimize the stress of crowds and parking lots.
- Schedule some of your favorite “me” time over the holidays. See a movie, read a book, or just set aside some quiet meditative time to thoroughly slow down.
- Take outdoor breaks: stargaze for a few minutes or take a long walk in the brisk air.
- Enjoy a long, relaxing, candle-lit soak in the tub with bath fragrances or salts, and put on some soothing music in the background.
- If your holiday stress gets to be too much, contact your Magellan program at any time for confidential, no-cost counseling and resources.