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# Holiday Stress Survival Guide

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UAW -GM Work/Family Program

# What Holiday Stress Can Do

**Mind Racing?** Worrying too much?  
**Tossing and turning in bed?** Muscles Tense?  
**Irritable, Impatient, Negative?**  
**Drinking more? Smoking more?** Panicked about money and time?  
**Headaches, Body Aches?** **Overeating, Undereating?** **Exhausted?**  
SAD, WITHDRAWN, SLUGGISH?  
**Overwhelmed?**

## Sound familiar?

*“Every year as the holiday season approaches, I feel a sense of dread mixed in with all the excitement. Parties, celebrations and gatherings seem to be tied in a race with my worries about money for gifts, not enough time to get everything done, family conflict during gatherings, guilty feelings that I didn’t spend time with someone I should have, and sadness from missing a departed loved one. I wind up with a schedule/responsibility overload and doing things in excess that I know are not good for me now or in the long run. How can I find a balance and relief from holiday stress and still enjoy the season?”*

## You're Not Alone

These feelings are not uncommon as we enter the holiday season with whatever one's custom is for the holidays. As a matter of fact, the American Psychological Association cites that 69% of Americans report significant stress caused by the holiday season and all that goes with it; 20% report that they fear the holidays will actually adversely affect their health.

## Your Health

The nation's hospital Emergency Department physicians report sharp increases in stress-associated symptoms and illnesses during the holiday season. Stress can present itself in humans physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically. It is closely linked to the six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung disease, accidents, cirrhosis, and suicide. Unaddressed stress can compromise health, suppress immunity, depress mood, drain confidence, deplete self esteem, and strain relationships.

## Protect Your Wellbeing

According to greeting cards and commercials, the holidays should be nothing but merry and jolly, however as anyone who has juggled a job, family responsibilities, and other seasonal obligations knows, the reality isn't quite that simple. Holiday-induced stress can be harmful if not managed. Diffusing and handling damaging stress levels will allow the mind and body a better chance to function at optimal levels. NOW is the time to single out areas you know are physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically depleting. Select options and make a plan. Apply techniques and arrange support to protect your wellbeing so that your spirit is bright during the holidays!

# Understanding Stress

## Stress Defined

Stress means pressure or strain. It presents itself in humans physically, mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. Stress responses occur in two forms: **EU**-stress which is a positive force such as an athletic competition in which one strives to compete and win and **DIS**-stress in which a certain limit of stress imposed on the mind/body can be harmful and can cause an immune-chemical-biological effect.

## What happens during prolonged stress?

Stress exhaustion can occur. Also known as chronic or long term stress. The body is constantly producing higher levels of stress hormones released from the brain and doesn't have time to recover. These hormones build up in the bloodstream and can cause health problems. Emotions such as anger, anxiety, impatience, worry, sadness, etc., if continuous, are stress stimulators that can cause suppression of bodily functions.

## Rate your stress level

What responses do you have during/after a stressful event?

- \* Fast, rapid beating heart rate
- \* Loss of appetite
- \* Headache/undiagnosed aches
- \* Rapid, shallow breathing
- \* Sweating
- \* Tightening of muscles
- \* Cold extremities
- \* Diarrhea/constipation
- \* Concentration difficulty
- \* Irritability/agitation
- \* Anxiousness/nervousness
- \* Excessive worry
- \* Destructive behaviors
- \* Memory losses
- \* Short fuse/temper
- \* Impatient

# Keep a Stress Log

You may not know what is causing your stress, exactly how your mind/body responds to it, or how you can cope with stress. To find out, keep a log to track when you feel stressed.

Time of day	Intensity of stress (scale 1-10)	Stressful Event	Reaction (symptoms, thoughts, Behaviors)	How did you Respond	Rate of response effective (scale 1-10)	Rate mood after (scale 1-10)

## Seeking Help

The more information you record on your log, the more you can learn about your stress patterns. Tracking your stress for 1-2 weeks is best. Reviewing patterns might help you determine actions you can take to reduce the intensity, frequency and responses to stressors. However, seeking medical and mental health expertise would be a first priority if physical/mental symptoms are present and frequent and increase in intensity. A physician or a mental health expert can provide a more systematic and comprehensive approach to help you.

## Stress Management Benefits

Being aware, learning options, techniques, strategies and using resources will help you prevent, defuse or handle damaging stress levels in order to allow the mind and body a better chance to function at optimum levels.

- ★ Heart rate decreases
- ★ Breathing becomes slower, deeper
- ★ Blood pressure stabilizes
- ★ Muscles relax
- ★ Energy and focus increases
- ★ Problem solving heightens
- ★ Anxiety, tension decrease
- ★ Immune system strengthens

# Managing Stress: Make A Plan

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## Schedule

Organizing and pre-planning your time WILL reduce stress. Get a calendar and begin to plan when things need to occur. Make “To Do” lists and prioritize, starting with things that must happen followed by other things that need tending.

## Some is Better than None

Before you agree to honor someone’s request on top of everything else you already have to do, stop yourself and visually scan your “To Do” lists in your mind – can this fit in? If not, immediately respond that you can’t this year or that you can help with a part of it. Saying no or agreeing to some rather than all allows you to not feel resentful and frees up extra precious time.

## Delegate & Simplify

Divide up tasks with others. Downsize the usual grand plans for simpler plans. Send 10 holiday cards instead of 25. Put two decorations up instead of a dozen. Have a Potluck feast. The big picture is being together, not producing a 5 star event, etc.

## Set a Holiday Budget and Stick to It

Exercising restraint in overspending WILL reduce stress. Economic hardship has hit everybody. Set a predetermined amount of money that you will adhere to. If tempted to go over, remind yourself the hardship it will cause in January – is it worth it? Suggest ahead of time to those you buy gifts that downscaling is a necessity. Starting new traditions such as purchasing gifts for one person, budgeting a specific amount for gifts, and purchasing a movie or magazine subscription versus buying expensive gifts are ways to significantly help your finances.

## Assign Limits & Replacements (Eating/ Drinking/Smoking)

Does stress cause one to consume more food, alcohol or smoking or does too much eating, drinking, or smoking cause stress? Overindulging does not have to go hand in hand with the holidays. Overindulging has damaging effects on the body and mind and can spread to those you are with.

- ✦ Pre-plan and assign limits.
- ✦ Write out limits and replacements on an index card, tuck into a pocket and view every hour during your outing or gathering.
- ✦ Select a support buddy (to accompany you or to be available by phone), review your plan/limits.
- ✦ Rehearse unexpected events with your support buddy and contract with them to help keep you on track.
- ✦ Apply portion control. Commit to a strong plan of attack.

## Accept Expectations

Intense feelings can arise during the holidays that involve family conflict, loneliness, and upsetting behaviors. Actions listed below may help defuse these intense feelings.

- ✦ The first step is to anticipate and validate feelings that you expect to have or witness during the holiday event. Decide if you want to acknowledge these feelings privately or to share them. If you wish to share them, decide who it is best to discuss them with.
- ✦ Next, make your plans on how you will handle situations when they occur. Consider your options:
  - Choosing to be alone and safely occupying time with “X”.
  - Choosing to spend a pre-determined amount of time with others.

- Dismissing yourself from the room or the event when it feels like it is time, followed by a pre-planned activity such as watching a movie at home.
- Make a phone call to connect with someone, etc.
- \* Ahead of the event, let others know what your wishes are and request support during this holiday time. Limiting or refusing invitations is okay.
- \* Reviewing expectations ahead of time allows responses to be planned, rather than being caught offguard and assists in handling upset feelings.

## **Benefits of Taking Action to Handle Stress Levels**

- \* Experience a sense of control, calm, peace and balance that benefits emotional wellbeing and overall health. These benefits can extend to other parts of your life as well, including medical conditions.
- \* Gain a new perspective on stressful situations and how you are impacted.
- \* Build skills to know what options/actions you have available when you are confronted with stress.
- \* Discover and use resources that you weren't aware of or never took advantage of.
- \* Be mindful that there is always some degree of assistance or a resource that can be located and tried to help your mind and body function more optimally.



# Strategies

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## Mind and Body—Take Good Care

If given the right ingredients, the mind and body can help process stress without damaging effects. First determine if you should consult medical or mental health experts and consider some of the following strategies to help keep your mind and body strong.

### Support System

Friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, religious communities, clubs/groups, medical/mental health experts are all examples of how to build your own support system. Share, discuss, and listen. Address concerns, worries and challenges. Don't assume someone knows what you are thinking, needing, wanting or feeling. Connecting to a support group can help stress levels by allowing you to hear other approaches you may not have considered. It also helps diffuse feelings and creates a bridge with someone you know to simply listen or help take action steps for you to begin to feel better.

### Feed the body

Your physical wellness will help support your emotional wellbeing. Eat well and make conscious food choices. Balance food groups, monitor use of sugar, alcohol and caffeine, which can exacerbate stress in some cases.

### Activate Your Body Chemistry

Allow your body's chemistry to work for you. All you need to do is activate it. The natural, feel-good chemicals in the body (i.e., endorphins, enkephalins, and serotonin) are released during moderate, pleasurable forms of exercise. Simply walking from the furthest parking spot can increase that "feel good" factor. If being outside is not an option, be inventive and find ways to move indoors.

## Formula for Sleep

When under excessive stress, more rest is required of the body in order to replenish and recover. Nightly sleep that is long and deep may not be possible. Therefore build in mini rest breaks or power naps when possible. Follow with a rest break when doing something productive in order to boost your energy.

## Fresh Oxygen

A brisk walk for 10 minutes a day, if physically able, can facilitate the intake of fresh oxygen which permeates your cells, giving your mind and body a boost.

## Hydrate

Treat your body as if it is a garden in a desert by ridding it of any stored toxins. Hydrate with fresh water frequently.

## Sweet Silence, Breath Work

Commit 5 minutes to the purity and healing effect of silence while repeating, "I am at peace now." Inhale deeply, allowing fresh oxygen to enter, and then exhale. Relaxing the mind is cited as a world-renowned strategy by athletes and health care providers in helping to reduce stress and healing the mind and body.

## Limit Screen Time

Set a screen time limit for yourself. Turn off computers and smart phones at least 30 minutes prior to sleep. Abandon distracting calls, texts, and emails after a designated time at night.

## Exercise Your Funny Bone

Technology has created quick access to a good laugh, i.e., movies, video clips, websites with jokes. Feel good chemicals are activated with every chuckle.

## Challenge Your Mind

Research shows challenging your mind to a new task or activity daily (i.e., crossword puzzles) distracts your mind from ongoing stress momentarily, as well as enhancing brain cell growth and memory.

# Techniques

## Release Endorphins

Endorphins are hormones which have a euphoric, pain relieving effect on the mind and body. Exercise can trigger a steady stream of endorphins. If physically able, to counteract stress levels, perform some form of brisk body movement for at least 10 minutes, 3 times a day. Here are some creative ways of adding movement to your day. Park in the farthest parking spot. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Stretching your arms and kick your legs during TV commercials.

## 3 Minute Tension Relieving Exercise

Close your eyes. Exhale old stale air from your lungs. Place your hand on your navel. Inhale slowly through your nose as if you are blowing up a balloon. On the out breath, exhale as if you are filling up the balloon. Repeat this 3 times and pause for 2 minutes. Deep purposeful “belly breathing” removes stress from your mind by placing your focus on your breath, oxygenating the blood and sending a signal to calm the mind and body.

## RELAX Exercise

Tighten all the muscles in your body: forehead, jaw, cheeks, shoulders, fists, arms, torso, legs, toes. Hold this for 10 seconds. Slowly release one muscle at a time. Imagine inhaling peace and joy and exhaling worry and tension. Repeat. Use alternative imagery. Exhale things that no longer serve you, and inhale things you would like to bring into your life or things that make you feel peaceful and relaxed, i.e., ocean waves.

## **FACTUALIZE Exercise**

Inaccurate information, hearsay and rumors can trigger damaging stress effects. When given stressful information, try to pause with a deep breath – do not allow room for your imagination to “catastrophize.” Collect or get assistance in collecting facts. Seek out someone you regard as being levelheaded to guide you. Use the “STOP” technique and imagine a STOP sign, should false, overwhelming thoughts present themselves. Use deep breaths and/or peaceful images to replace stress thoughts.

## **Have a Good Cry**

Letting feelings out can bring physical and mental relief to the mind and body. Research has shown that emotional tears have a chemical structure that help detoxify the body. Also, tears can help produce endorphins which are pain relieving hormones in the body. Crying helps express pain. For what we don't express, we repress – which is toxic for the body.

## **Music as Medicine**

Research has shown that music can have a profound healing effect on the body and psyche. Hospitals are now using music therapy to help with pain management, which calms patients, eases muscle tension, etc. Brainwaves have been shown to resonate in sync with the musical beat. A faster tempo promotes sharper, clearer thinking and a slower tempo promotes a calming, meditative state. Breathing and heart rates can be effected with the same patterns. Use music to help counteract the damaging effects of stress.

# Mindful Meditation

Mindfulness interventions have been demonstrated as beneficial for a number of psychological and physical conditions such as anxiety/stress, chronic pain, high blood pressure, addictions and depression. Mindfulness is a type of meditation that involves focusing the mind on thoughts/feelings, sensations, breathing and surroundings. There are several techniques, such as a mindful shower. In the shower, stop your thought process. As you take a breath, repeat, “I calm my body.” As you exhale say, “I relax.” Use your breath as an anchor for wandering thoughts. Observe the droplets of water on the shower wall as they trickle. Observe the shape and the force of the water as it sprays. Listen to the sound it makes. Smell the fragrance of the soap. Taste the water droplets. Watch the swirls of water on the shower floor as they bounce off your toes. Apply these actions to other daily activities.

# Avoid Alcohol, Caffeine, Nicotine, Sugars

## Alcohol

**In small doses, the initial effects of alcohol can have stimulating effects such as increased talkativeness, feelings of energy, and desire for action. However, alcohol is actually in the depressant class of drug types.** Alcohol, like sedatives and tranquilizers, actually slows down functions of the central nervous system, for example, judgement and increased confusion, irritability, heightened emotions, and the inability to process logic. Alcohol can change the way that the body deals with stress. It can decrease the hormone cortisol which the body releases to respond to stress, and it can prolong the feelings of tension produced by stress.

## Caffeine and Nicotine

**Although caffeine and nicotine are stimulants, they can increase the level of stress rather than reduce it.**

Caffeine can also lead to the production of the stress hormone cortisol, which if continuously released, can cause physical symptoms associated with anxiety, such as heart palpitations, restlessness, chest tightness, hot flushes and other symptoms. Nicotine, regarded as a psychoactive or mood altering drug, when smoked, reaches the brain in eight seconds and causes the release of a chemical called dopamine. Dopamine causes feelings of pleasure and relaxation, a sensation the body craves again and again. However, during these feelings of perceived relaxation, the body is actually experiencing increased stress – blood pressure and heart rate increase, muscles become tense, and less oxygen is available to the body and brain. The feelings of relief described by people who smoke may just be relief from short-term symptoms of withdrawal from nicotine.

## Sugars

**Avoiding or reducing the intake of refined sugars will also help with stress overload on the body's ability to function. Many processed foods/beverages contain refined sugars.** After eating sugar, a short burst of energy may be experienced. Later, however, blood sugar levels often drop, known as a 'crash', resulting in feelings of irritability and fatigue. When blood sugar levels get too low, known as hypoglycemia, symptoms of anxiety may be experienced. When sugar levels swing from high to low, the hormones adrenaline and cortisol are released, which can cause anxiety and panic which stress the mind and body.

## Replacements

A well-balanced plate or snack including plant derived foods helps nourish cells, providing energy and clarity. Exchange caffeinated and alcohol-containing products for water, herbal teas, or diluted natural fruit juices. Aiming to keep hydrated will help the body rid itself of toxins and cope better with stress. Adopt a replacement habit for nicotine. Ideally this habit should be something that can be done every time a there is a craving for a product containing nicotine. If the replacement habit can't fill in for nicotine every time there is a craving, several other replacement habits will be needed to keep the hands and mind busy. Some replacement habits to consider include a new hobby, such as cooking, meditation or deep breathing, exercising, chewing on ice, sucking air through a straw, sucking on a piece of hard candy, or making something with your hands. Nourishing the body and mind can powerfully reduce negative stress effects.

## Yoga

Yoga involves a series of moving/stationary poses combined with deep breathing. The outcome is tension released from large muscles, body and brain flushed with fresh blood and oxygen and the transport of nutrients which all results in feelings of well-being.

## Pet Therapy

Recent studies indicate that interactions with pets, even if for brief intervals, are powerful forms of stress relief, lowering not only blood pressure but also harmful stress hormones like cortisol, which is associated with depression and anxiety, and elevating beneficial ones like oxytocin, which is linked to happiness and relaxation. Simply watching an aquarium for 30 minutes has been shown to to be a powerful relaxant and lowers blood pressure significantly.

# Mental Health Awareness

## Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

SAD is a type of depression which occurs during the darker winter months each year. It is often referred to as the “winter blues.” It is believed to be caused by a lack of sunlight that may upset the sleep-wake cycle and other circadian rhythms.

As well, serotonin, a brain chemical that affects mood may be involved. Although the condition is seasonally limited, patients may have significant impairment from the associated depressive symptoms. It is often under-diagnosed by physicians who do not use the necessary tools to screen for it.

## Signs and Symptoms

A diagnosis is made when at least two episodes similar to those of depressive mood had occurred in colder months with none at other times of the year over a two year period or longer. Low Vitamin D levels are typically present. Upon arrival of seasons with more daylight, symptoms seem to be eliminated.

- \* Difficulty in waking up
- \* Increased appetite
- \* Decreased energy/lethargy
- \* Difficulty in concentrating
- \* Withdrawal from family/friends
- \* Craving for sweet/starchy foods (carbohydrates)
- \* Increased sleep
- \* Weight gain
- \* Decreased interest in sex
- \* Depression/anxiety/irritability



## Treatment Options

Seeking care from a physician that is knowledgeable about SAD may improve your ability to be treated properly for the condition.

- ✦ Natural light/artificial indoor lighting
- ✦ Winter vacation to sunny area
- ✦ Antidepressant medications
- ✦ Regular exercise
- ✦ Light Therapy
- ✦ Communicate, educate others on condition
- ✦ Counseling therapy

## Suicide Prevention Help

**Having Trouble Coping with any Troubles?  
Suicide Prevention and Crisis Lifeline**

- \* Staffed 24/7 days a week with trained counselors
- \* Phone: 800-273-8255
- \* 988

## Speak Up If You Are Worried

Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously. If you think a family member or friend may be considering suicide, take some type of action. If you don't know what to say to them, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) and ask what you can say and do. Taking action may save the person's life. The following are some examples of how to start talking.

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*How to start a conversation:*

*I have been concerned about you lately.*

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*Questions to ask:*

*When did you begin feeling this way? How can I support you right now?*

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*What to say that may help:*

*You are not alone in this, I am here for you. I may not understand how you feel, but I care and want to help you; you mean a great deal to me and to others.*

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## **Symptoms:**

- \* Talking about suicide
- \* Seeking out lethal means
- \* Preoccupation with death
- \* No hope for future
- \* Self loathing, self hatred
- \* Giving things away, getting affairs in order
- \* Saying goodbye
- \* Withdrawing from others
- \* Self destruction
- \* Sudden sense of calm

*Depression plays a significant role. A suicidal person is often not able to imagine any type of viable solution to their suffering. This is due to distorted thinking caused by depression.*

**Call the lifeline for help 24hours day/ 7 days week**

**1-800-273-8255 (TALK)**

## Respond Quickly in a Crisis

Those at highest risk for committing suicide, have a specific suicide PLAN, the MEANS to carry out the plan, a TIME SET for doing it and INTENTION to do it. Below are questions to assess the immediate risk for suicide:

- \* Do you have a suicide plan? (PLAN)
- \* Do you have what you need to carry out the plan? (MEANS)
- \* Do you know when you will do it? (TIME SET)
- \* Do you intend to commit suicide? (INTENTION)

A high or severe level of possibility for a person to commit suicide is if they have suicidal thoughts, have a specific plan and says they may or may not commit suicide.

If a suicide seems imminent, call a local crisis center, dial 911 or take the person to the nearest emergency center. Remove any lethal objects that could be harmful. **NEVER LEAVE A SUICIDAL PERSON ALONE** under any circumstances.

## Offer Help and Support

The best way to help is to listen to the person, provide empathy, do not leave them alone and get professional help for them.

- \* Get professional help
- \* Visit, call and take the person on outings
- \* Make a safety plan/phone numbers
- \* Ensure follow up on treatment
- \* Encourage nutrition, sleep and exercise
- \* Remove means of suicide

# Alcohol Use During the Holidays and Every Other Day

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## Are you drinking too much? Do you know someone who is?

Below are questions that may help you take an inventory of alcohol use in your daily life (or someone you know) and/or during the holidays.

### Inventory questions to help determine if help is needed:

- ✦ Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
- ✦ Do you have more than “just one drink” to unwind, relax?
- ✦ Does your drinking worry your family?
- ✦ Have others criticized you for your drinking?
- ✦ Do you drink alone when you feel sad or angry?
- ✦ Does your drinking ever make you late for or effect work?
- ✦ Do you ever drink after telling yourself you won’t?
- ✦ Are you experiencing memory lapses?
- ✦ Have you ever had a drink to steady a hangover?
- ✦ Do you drink and try to conceal it?

*If **yes** is the most frequent answer, explore resource links so that you can learn what types of options will help you make positive changes.*

## Support/Resources

If your inventory determines that you drink too much, you have already taken the first step in getting help. It takes courage and strength to face drinking habits. The second step is getting support and using resources. You do not have to face this alone. Support is essential. Guidance from those who know what to do, where to go, and the most effective process that will work for you will ease difficulties and transitions. Without support or resources, it is easy to fall back into old patterns especially when there is a high level of stress. One or a combination of the following support options and resources can be very effective.

### **Personal Physician/Hospital**

Guidance to treatment specialists and facilities.

### **UAW-GM Work/Family/EAP Program**

Consult your local UAW-GM Work/Family Representative for confidential help.

**Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) – (212) 870-3400  
Free programs worldwide. Weekly meetings in most locations. 12 Step recovery program for people in all levels of use and recovery. Not regarded as only source of treatment however highly regarded for success in supporting people, provides anonymity and privacy. Offers strategies to help one cope and to feel less alone in their process of getting help and resolution.

### **Narcotics** [www.narcotics.com](http://www.narcotics.com)

Phone: (844) 431-5818

### **Al-Anon** [www.alanon.org](http://www.alanon.org)

Phone: (888) 425-2666

Help for family and loved ones of alcoholics.

### **Co-Dependants Anonymous** [www.codependents.org](http://www.codependents.org)

Phone: (888) 444-2359 or Español (888) 444-2379

For family and loved ones.

**Adult Children of Alcoholics (310) 534-1815**

**Al-Anon /Alateen Help for Teens of Alcoholics  
(757) 563-1600**

**National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence  
(NCADD) [www.ncadd.us](http://www.ncadd.us)**

# December – National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

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During the holiday season, and year round, it is important that celebration includes avoiding drunk and drugged driving. Being substance use free is safest. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), about three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives. Drugged driving includes illegal use of prescription drugs/narcotics. Driving under the influence of any drug that affects the brain could impair one's motor skills, reaction time and judgment. This puts the driver, passenger and those whom share the road at risk. Risk of impairment and potential death from drugged use, as well as addiction, are principal concerns that may impact one's health and life.

Tips from the NHTSA to help you stay safe:

- \* Plan ahead.
- \* Always designate a substance use-free (alcohol/drugs) driver before any holiday party or celebration begins.
- \* If you or someone is taking medication, including over the counter substances, check with a pharmacist in advance of the event to determine any affect the medication may have with alcoholic beverages.
- \* If you are drinking, know your limit and stay within it. Don't participate if 'chugging' or other drinking games that promote consuming extreme levels of alcohol are involved. Limit drinks and have non-alcoholic beverages so that your blood alcohol content level is not at risk.

- \* Be honest with yourself. If you realize you or your driver are impaired, make arrangements with the host to stay until you are unimpaired or call for a taxi for a ride.
- \* If you are hosting a party, take the keys as people arrive at the event and return them only if sure the individual isn't impaired. Offer alcoholic-free beverages and plenty of food. High protein food, such as meat, cheese and peanuts, will help slow the absorption of alcohol into a person's body. Ensure guests leaving are either unimpaired or leaving with someone who is unimpaired. If children under the age of 21 are present, ensure they are not given access to alcoholic beverages.
- \* Whether you're attending or hosting an event, be observant; speak up if necessary. The holidays will be healthier if we not only take care of ourselves but others as well. Police patrols and substance free checkpoints are stepped up during the holidays. While you're doing your best to ensure all are kept well and the road's are safe, law enforcement personnel will be doing the same.



# Prescription Drugs and Safety

In some situations, holiday stress can trigger physical and emotional pain whereby someone may elect to use a prescription drug to help the pain. When used properly and as prescribed, prescription drugs may enhance one's health, wellbeing and quality of life. However, when prescription drugs are abused, the consequences can be deadly. Many prescription drug abusers, when unable to obtain or afford prescription drugs, begin using heroin, because heroin is a cheaper alternative that offers the same physiological effects.

The best way to reduce risk of overdose is to take only the medication prescribed by a physician exactly as directed by the physician, do not share or sell medications and keep them in a secure spot that only you have access to. If you are concerned about addiction potential, ask your physician about the possibility of alternatives. If you are concerned about opioid addiction for yourself or for someone whom you think has addiction potential, talk to them about getting help.

**If someone has symptoms of overdose, DO NOT LET THEM SLEEP IT OFF! Call 911 immediately.**

Overdose symptoms include:

- \* Gurgling/raspy breathing
- \* Very slow/shallow breathing
- \* Blue lips/fingernails
- \* Inability to speak/slurred speech
- \* Very low pulse
- \* Limp body
- \* Vomiting
- \* Pale skin
- \* Dizziness
- \* Passed out

# Support/Resources/ Apps

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Stress overload can be helped tremendously by a support system of some kind. Talking things out often helps clarify, place everything in order/perspective, and relieves some pressure levels. Seeking a source of support, professional or personal – such as a trusted peer, is typically more helpful than keeping everything inside and dealing with stressful issues by oneself.

## UAW-GM Work/Family (EAP) Representative

The UAW-GM Work/Family (EAP) Program provides available options for help and support in resolving personal problems affecting job performance. These include resources and referrals for marital or family problems, mental health situations, financial troubles, and problems with alcohol or drugs. Your local UAW-GM Work/Family (EAP) Representatives are available in the plant on a confidential basis.

During the holiday vacation, you can call 1-888-848-1979 to connect with the referral agency, CDR Careline.

## Physician/Hospital

Most major cities have hospitals that have a 24-hour hotline staffed by a triage nurse who can assist in locating psychological help. Local physicians can serve as a resource to get proper help. These numbers can be located on the internet or in phone directories.

## Religious Networks

Most cities have diverse religious networks according to religious practice/beliefs. Usually there is a support system that is available to anyone in need. These numbers can be accessed via the internet or phone directories.

## Agencies

There are many organizations that deal with physical and mental needs, i.e., American Heart Association, United Way, American Red Cross, and Salvation Army, etc. These organizations are capable of locating resources that can be helpful. Their local numbers can be accessed via the internet and phone directories.

## Support Groups

Peer support can be a very helpful tool when going through a stressful experience. These groups, specialized according to area of concern, are led by peers or mental health professionals. Online support groups, discussion boards, and blogs are newer types of support meetings along with the traditional in-person groups. Mental Health America ([www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)) maintains a listing of a broad range of support services and activities.

## 24-Hour Hotlines

For mental health emergencies, go directly to a local hospital emergency room, call 911, or call the National Suicide Prevention and Crises Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or 988. Child-Help USA (1-800-422-4453) assists both child and adult survivors of all types of abuse. A broad range of hotline numbers is available at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) and 1-800-969-6642.

## Helpful Internet Web Links

### Winter Safety

**Hypothermia, Frostbite, Home Safety/Emergency Kit**

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/index.html>

### Holiday Safety Toolkit

<https://www.ready.gov/holiday-safety-social-media-toolkit>

### Holiday Safety Home Tips

<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/winter/holiday>

### New Year's Eve Safety Tips

<https://blog.americansafetycouncil.com/new-years-eve-safety-tips/>

### Holiday Safe Driving

**Protect Your Passengers**

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/holiday-road-safety/index.html>

# Helpful Apps\*

## AA (ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS)

This sobriety tool is available for members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Provides a Big Book reader, prayers, Big Book promises, search tool, sobriety calculator, notes, and AA contacts database. An anonymous icon protects anonymity by not showing references to AA. Also contains an extensive meeting directory and program descriptions.

## NA & AA (NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS)

This app is geared to relapse prevention. It teaches the user how to identify thoughts and feelings which can lead to relapse. Then it leads the user to a daily reading geared to what they are currently experiencing which helps change “relapse” thinking into “sober” thinking. It also calculates sober time and money saved staying sober. It was developed by a licensed chemical dependency counselor who personally has over 27 years of sobriety.

## Breath2Relax

Information on the effects of stress on the body and instructions and practice exercises to help learn diaphragmatic breathing.

## Mindfulness App

Helps to improve mental health and overall wellbeing. Includes 5 day guided introduction to mindfulness, session times from 3 to 30 minutes, and reminders to stay focused.

## Relaxing Sounds of Nature

Helps create a calming environment for you to relax. Enjoy the sounds of nature to fall into a deep sleep, create ambient noise, or have a relaxing moment from your stresses.

## The Worry Box

Use the worry cognitive diary to help you determine how to cope with the worry. If it's controllable, you can list the steps you can take to manage the worry. If it's not controllable, select from the list of coping statements to help you think about it differently.

## Happify

A brain training program of games and guided reflection to help improve your level of happiness with increases in positive emotions and life satisfaction.

## Calm.com

Calm app is for mindfulness and meditation to bring more clarity, joy and peace to your daily life. Join the millions experiencing less anxiety and better sleep with our guided meditations, Sleep Stories, breathing programs and relaxing music. Recommended by top psychologists and mental health experts to help you de-stress. Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners, but also includes hundreds of programs for intermediate and advanced users.

*\* When selecting apps to use and download, always review app developers expertise/credibility and fees that may apply.*

# Personalized Plan: Holiday Stress Survival

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## Directions

For holiday stress survival during the holidays:

1. Select and identify specific strategies and tools.
2. Label the month/year.
3. Record tools/strategies in each week.
4. At the beginning of each day, be mindful of the action you commit to in order to limit your stress levels. Review your intended actions. You are committing to taking care of your wellbeing by doing so.
5. At the end of your day, reflect on the actions you took to limit stressors. Check off each day you are successful with your actions (use check boxes for each day). A habit can be developed in 21 days. Stress-reducing skills will serve you and your wellbeing when you need it most!

**Live Well,  
Longer!**

## Stress Strategies

- Support System
- Schedule
- Delegate/Simplify
- Budget
- Limits/Replacements
- Social Planning
- Limit Screen Time
- Fueling The Body
- Scheduled Exercise
- Scheduled Sleep
- Hydration
- Breath Work
- Laughter
- Brain Work
- Prescription Drug Safety
- Driving Safety
- Chemical-Free Foods, Drink

## Tools

- Stress Log
- Apps
- Mental Health Specialist
- Tension Relievers
- Good Cry
- Music As Medicine
- Yoga
- Factual Exercise
- Mindful Meditation
- Relax Exercise
- Resources/Support Groups/Hotlines
- Religious Networks
- Pet Therapy

## Stress Survival Strategies + Stress Reducing Tools

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**= Holiday Stress Survival**



# My Plan

Month \_\_\_\_\_

Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 1**    Day 1    Day 2    Day 3    Day 4    Day 5    Day 6    Day 7

Tools:

Strategies:

**Week 2**    Day 1    Day 2    Day 3    Day 4    Day 5    Day 6    Day 7

Tools:

Strategies:

**Week 3**    Day 1    Day 2    Day 3    Day 4    Day 5    Day 6    Day 7

Tools:

Strategies:

**Week 4**    Day 1    Day 2    Day 3    Day 4    Day 5    Day 6    Day 7

Tools:

Strategies:

**Notes:**

# Holiday Stress Survival Checklist

- Know What Holiday Stress Can Do**
- Protect Your Wellbeing**
- Rate Your Stress Level**
- Keep a Stress Log**
- Seek Help**
- Manage Stress: Make a Plan**
  - Schedule/Delegate/
  - Set a Budget/Assign
  - Replacements/Accept
  - Expectations
- Strategies:**
  - Support System /Nutrition/
  - Exercise/Sleep/Hydrate/
  - Breath Work/Limit Screen
  - Time/Humor/Brain Work
- Techniques:**
  - Tension Releasers/
  - Factualize/Tears/Music/
  - Mindfulness/Avoidances
- Mental Health Awareness:**
  - Seasonal Affective
  - Disorder/Suicide
  - Prevention Help
- Drinking & Drugged Driving Prevention**
- Prescription Drugs Safety**
- Support/Resources**
- Helpful Apps/Websites**
- Personalized Stress Survival Plan**

**All of the information provided in this pamphlet is to assist you in managing the stress you may incur during the holidays.**

**May Your Holidays Be Stress-less**

peace.

it does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. it means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart.

{unknown}



UAW-GM JOINT PROGRAMS

