

Tips for Less Stress During Christmas Week

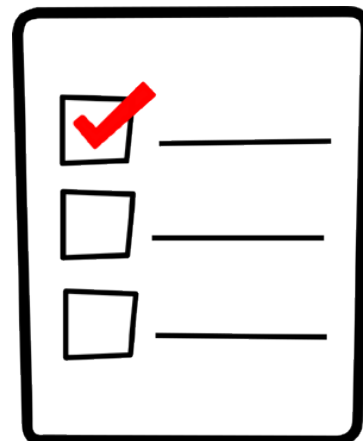
The holidays are supposed to be a joyous time for families. But between the last minute shopping, the gift wrapping, the planning and the cooking, the week of Christmas can get insanely stressful.

Here are some tips to help you keep stress to a minimum so you can enjoy Christmas to the fullest.

- Keep meals as simple as possible. Using a meal plan and preparing ingredients ahead of time can help you keep meals healthy with less stress. But if things are getting too hectic to cook, remember that tossing a frozen pizza in the oven one night won't cause irreparable harm.



- Keep plenty of healthy snacks on hand. This will help eliminate worries about the kids getting the nutrition they need each day. Popular grab-and-go options include seedless grapes, baby carrots, trail mix and wheat crackers.
- Enlist some help from the kids. Ask teens to take over cooking duties from time to time, and give younger kids step by step instructions for making one dish while you work on another. Even preschoolers can be surprisingly helpful – ask them to fetch ingredients and help with the measuring.
- Keep your to-do list doable. It's far too easy to overschedule around Christmastime. Planning ahead is key. Sit down and make a list of everything that needs to be done by the 25th a couple of weeks ahead of time, then spread it out. That way you won't be rushing around at the last minute.
- Make time for yourself. Schedule some time for exercise each day, and make sure you have at least a half hour or so to just relax in the evening. By making sure your own needs are met, you'll be better able to attend to everyone else's.



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- Be prepared for the unexpected. Not everything will go as planned, so it's important to be flexible. Simple measures such as tidying up the guest room and keeping extra food on hand for unexpected guests can save you some worries.



And most of all, remember you don't have to be a superhero. The best memories you'll create at Christmas is the time you spend together...so do lots of that and let the other worries slide off your back.

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