

Combating Holiday Stress

It's that time of year again. The time of year when the spirit of joy, love, happiness, and peace is in the air. The time of year to enjoy family, friends, and for many, a time to reconnect spiritually and put into perspective our own lives as well as our relationships with others.

During the holiday season, we often hear the words "peace on earth." For many people, the holidays are far from peaceful. Shopping lists to fill, visiting loved ones, attending children's holiday programs, attend holidays functions of employers, not to mention dealing with the financial strain that the holidays can impose.

During this time of year, many find themselves in a state that is far from peaceful. Folks often find they have too much to do to get ready for the holidays, and not enough time in which to do it. For example, we need time to shop for those on our lists, find the time to visit with those close to us, attend holiday programs for our children, attend holidays functions of employers, not to mention dealing with the financial strain that the holidays can impose.

You may ask yourself "How can I make the holidays special for my loved ones without missing out on the peace and joy myself?"

Here are some useful tips to keep in mind around the holidays:

1. **Prioritize**

It can be helpful to make a list of what is necessary for you to accomplish in preparation of, and during the holidays.

2. **Don't Overschedule Yourself**

There are enough things going on during the holidays to keep us busy every moment. Spending time with family and friends is important. However, you don't want to feel like you are running constantly. Keep in mind that you can arrange time with others after the holidays if you feel there is a strain on your time.

3. **Be Mindful of Your Financial Situation**

If you have a limited budget, do not feel pressured into buying gifts for everyone. Tell your children if you are unable to afford all that is on their wish list. Consider making gifts instead of buying gifts if you feel obligated and your finances are limited. Oftentimes, just spending time with others is the best gift we can share. Trying to make others happy at your financial expense can cause undue stress on you after the holidays when the bills arrive. Reaching out can be the best gift of all.

4. **Don't Take On Family Problems**

People often become stressed out when spending time with family members due to unresolved problems or conflicts. Help yourself by not taking on the problems of others and avoid contributing to any tension.

5. **Take Time Out for Yourself**

Reflect on what the holidays mean to you. Spending quiet time at home or attending religious or spiritual services are a few examples of how you can regain perspective on what is important to you. Only if we feel inner peace and joy can we share this with others.

6. **Ask for Help from Others**

If you feel stretched too thin during the holidays, ask for assistance from those around you. This might include asking for help with wrapping gifts or putting up decorations, or preparing the holiday meal. Remember, in this season of giving, that it is alright to accept help from others.

GARY BREUER, MA, LPC



My private practice is located in North Scottsdale, within the offices of PsychArizona. I work with children (ages 6 and older), pre-teens, adolescents and adults. I work with individuals, couples and families with issues of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, career, academic and workplace issues, relationship issues, LGBT concerns, personal growth and spirituality.

I use various therapeutic approaches depending on the needs of the client. These approaches include developmental, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, existential, family-systems, mindfulness-based, transpersonal, and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). EMDR is a model used for the treatment of trauma, and has also been found to be successful in the treatment of various other disorders as well.

I have experience providing professional counseling in clinical, business, and school settings.

Apart from my private practice, I am also a Reiki Master and have a great appreciation and respect for alternative as well as conventional treatment approaches.

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