



Stress Management Society
...from distress to de-stress



Tel: 0844 357 8629 Email: info@stress.org.uk URL: www.stress.org.uk Shop: www.feelkarma.com

Have a stress-free Christmas!

Will you be having a happy Christmas this year, or a hellish one? Take action now, and make sure it's a holiday to remember, rather than one that raises your blood pressure.

Preparing for the day

1. Plan ahead

Don't keep Christmas in your head. Get it down on paper. Buy a beautiful notebook and use it to record anything involved in planning Christmas, from seating plans and present ideas to the number of your taxi company and babysitter.

2. Delegate

Write out your list of things to do, then strike through the tasks that are neither urgent nor essential. Look at what's left and see what you could delegate, e.g. give someone responsibility for buying and putting up decorations. Your 'to do' list will instantly shrink.

3. Presents without shops

Gift-buying is one of the most stressful aspects of Christmas. But who wants to negotiate heaving high streets? Buy your presents on the internet or through catalogues instead and do it all in one day as this helps focus the mind. Online shops offer great value as they don't have the overheads of high street stores. Alternatively order from mail order catalogues (obtain these via www.catalink.com). Or visit our Feel Karma shop at www.feelkarma.com for a range of calming presents.

4. The easy way to write cards

Tackle this time-consuming task a little at a time. Write out your Christmas card list. Then keep a stack of cards and stamps handy on a table and every night sit down to write out a few.



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5. Have a cut off point

Decide now when you will stop preparing and start enjoying. Christmas Eve is a good time to put your feet up and admire your handiwork. If you work towards a goal, you are more likely to stick to it.

Christmas Day

1. Create a calming atmosphere

Play some relaxing music, and put lavender aromatherapy oil in a burner to help calm excitable children and stressed adults.

2. Sort out your table seating plan

If there is a relative coming to dinner that you dislike, don't sit opposite them. It's more likely to produce confrontations. Instead place them slightly to the side of you and opposite someone with good tolerance levels.

3. The more the merrier

Water down the effect of a dinner guest you dislike by inviting a couple more reasonable people along too. It's a case of the more the merrier!

4. Let's talk turkey

If you do plan to cook a bird, turkey or pheasant are good choices. They contain tryptophan from which we make the calming brain chemical serotonin. But if cooking stresses you out, book for Christmas dinner at a hotel or restaurant and let someone else take the strain. Not only does this cut out menu planning, and food preparation, but it also means you don't have to do the washing up.

5. Serve decaff

When your body is under stress it produces cortisol which prepares you for fight or flight situations. This is not only unhealthy long term, it also leaves you feeling wound tight as a spring. But it's not just stress that produces cortisol. Caffeine does too. So don't artificially add to your stressful feelings. Serve decaff coffee and tea instead or offer people herbal alternatives.



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[Learn some coping mechanisms](#)

1. Try internal aerobics

Stress makes your heart beat faster and your breathing shallow. Reverse that process with deep breathing. Breathe in for four counts through your nose, hold for 16 counts, then breathe out for eight through your mouth. Or try some hearty carol singing for an instant way to fill your lungs.

2. Think of 10-minute escape plans

Just a few minutes away from a stressful situation is enough time to regroup. So think of suitable escape plans – from popping out to the garden to feed the birds, to delivering last-minute cards to the neighbours. If you find yourself getting stressed, use one of these excuses to remove yourself from the situation and practice some deep breathing until you are feeling back on track.

3. Go for a walk

Exercise is an immediate tonic for stress. It burns off stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline and helps produce mood-enhancing endorphins. Take everyone out for a walk or a bike ride after lunch and let them work off their own stress.

4. Develop a drink problem

Alcohol dehydrates you and makes your liver work overtime to process it. Instead develop a healthy drink problem with water. This hydrates every part of the body and brain and helps you better cope with stressful situations.

5. Make a memory

Do you remember what you got for Christmas two years ago? Probably not. But you will cherish the memories that you have of times with your family and friends forever. So give the best present of all and arrange to do something a bit out of the ordinary. Get up early to see the sun rise. Try flying a kite. Hire costumes from a costume shop for the kids. Or get a friend to turn up dressed as Santa Claus for a short visit. You will raise everyone's endorphin levels and they will still be talking about it next year.



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Neil Shah, director of The Stress Management Society says: “There are some complex social issues to negotiate at Christmas especially when we invite relatives over that we might not get on with and cook what’s seen as perhaps the most important meal of the year. No wonder that one in 20 people considers Christmas more stressful than divorce or burglary.”

“But with a bit of preparation, you can get through it with your sanity intact.”

Stress Management Society is committed to giving you the tools you need to reduce the stress in your life.

CHRISTMAS PRODUCT SPECIALS

Plan your Christmas early so you can spread the cost and the stress – the last thing you want to do is battle with the crowds on Christmas Eve and end up burning a big hole in your wallet or purse.

Lets us help you pick up the best bargains this year without queuing up for hours in the shops. Visit our on-line shop, Feel Karma and we will have your wonderful gifts delivered to your door.

As a very special thank you to our newsletter readers we are pleased to offer you some exclusive discount codes to help you with your Christmas shopping.

Spend £25 or more and receive 5% off your shopping bill, enter code FK5* or

Spend £50 or more and receive 10% off your shopping total, enter code FK10*



**HAVE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL AT
THE STRESS MANAGEMENT SOCIETY!**