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**Stress and the Holidays!  
10 Tips on How to Cope**

Are your holidays full of snowmen, good cheer, gingerbread, and sleigh bells? If so, it may be time to turn off the television special and wake up to reality. For most people, the holidays include too much time standing in lines, heavy traffic, excessive credit card spending, entertaining relatives, and not enough fun. It's the season when you're expected to cram office parties, shopping, and family gatherings into your already busy life. In short, the holidays often mean STRESS!

But don't despair: It's never too late to put a little sanity back into the holiday season! Here are some tips to help you cope with and maybe even avoid this year's holiday stress:

**Be realistic.** As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to. But accept that you may have to let go of others.

**Keep moving.** Exercise is always a great stress reliever.

**Avoid a relative meltdown.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Practice forgiveness.

**Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

**Make a shopping list, and check it twice.** Staying organized will help you avoid any oversights or last-minute panic.

**Plan ahead** specific days for shopping, baking, visiting.

**Learn to say no.**

**Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on holiday treats. (See our article "Avoid Overeating at Holiday Parties")

**Don't get too ambitious.** Planning on an elaborate craft project with the kids? Keep in mind that a gingerbread mansion would be just as much fun in January. Are you in charge of making a seven-course holiday meal? Ask for lots of help, and don't hesitate to cut it down to four courses. If you're wrapping presents, ask your kids to help out.

**Forget about perfection.** Accept imperfections in yourself and in others.

**Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do.

Chai Tea

- 1 cup loose tea (black, green or rooibos)
- 2 Tbsp dried ginger finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp each whole cloves, crushed cinnamon sticks, whole cardamom seeds
- 2 tsp whole coriander seeds
- 1 tsp each whole anise seeds, black pepper corns

Mix together & store in airtight container. Heat 1 cup each "milk" & water together in saucepan, add 1 heaping Tbsp chai mix, simmer 20 minutes, strain and add honey to taste.

**Office Updates**

RMT hours have changed

Sylvie Hebert is available for CranioSacral therapy on Tuesdays from 11am-5pm.

Corey Henderson is available for therapeutic and relaxation massage on Thursdays 3-7pm and by appointment Mon and Wed.

Holiday Hours

Dr. Charlene Kush will be in Tues Dec 30 from 11-7pm.

Dr. Laura Grant will be in the office Mon, Dec 29 & Tues Dec 30, regular office hours.

The office will otherwise be closed from **Wed December 24th – Sun, Jan 3rd.** We will still be checking messages daily, so call if you have an emergency.

Dr. Caralei Peters

Dr. Peters is enjoying her time at home right now with her newest family addition. Katherine was born on August 29<sup>th</sup>, and is keeping mama busy. Dr. Peters will be returning to the office February 24<sup>th</sup>.



**Avoid Overeating at Holiday Parties**

- Eat the veggies and the low-fat cheeses from the party tray, your body won't crave the sugar so much if you eat healthfully
- Do a pre-party workout, this helps you to feel good, and encourages you to choose healthier options
- Eat before you go out, best not to approach a party with an empty stomach
- Use a small plate, or a napkin, this really does decrease your intake
- Fill up on fibre and protein before even looking at the dessert table, these keep you feel full and leave less room for nutrient poor sweets
- Take it slow, take small bites and chew slowly, it takes 20 minutes before your brain registers that you are full, so give it time before digging in to second helpings
- Eat up before you drink, alcohol decreases inhibitions and increases food cravings

- Plan ahead if you know you always eat too much, eat a little less throughout the day so that your overall calorie intake is not overboard

Lavendula angustifolia (Lavender)



*Lavendula* is a member of the mint family. It is native to the Mediterranean, but this perennial herb grows nicely in

Ontarian gardens. The fragrant, pale purple flowers and flower buds are used in potpourris, dried flower arrangements, and extracted of oil to be used medicinally.

Lavender's aromatic oil is used for its soothing and calming effect to the nervous system. A few drops of the essential oil added to bath water makes for a relaxing soak. Added to creams and salves it has antiseptic properties, and can heal burns and damaged skin. Dried flower petals have traditionally been sewn into sachets or eye masks to calm children and adults alike, for a relaxing sleep. Many think only of Lavender's aromatic qualities, while it can be used to enhance culinary dishes as well. Lavender added to chamomile tea heightens the relaxing effect. The sweetness of Lavender is brought out when combined with strawberries to make jam.

Magnesium

Magnesium is an alkaline earth metal. It is the third most abundant element dissolved in seawater. Magnesium ions are essential to all living cells, but 50% of the magnesium in the human body is found within the bones.

Magnesium is a highly flammable metal, and will easily ignite when powdered or shaved into thin strips. Once ignited, it is difficult to extinguish, and produces a brilliant white light. This property makes it invaluable to campers in cold, wet climates.

Magnesium in large amounts acts as an ionic laxative. It has been used for this purpose as well as an antacid commonly as "milk of magnesia". Magnesium sulfate salts, known as Epsom salts, are known for the muscle relaxing and mildly sedative properties.

Magnesium deficiency in humans is very common; partially due to magnesium deficient soils, and refining of food. While serum (blood) levels may appear normal on testing, cellular stores can be well within deficient ranges. Magnesium facilitates calcium absorption, and thus is extremely important for anyone taking calcium supplements for low bone density. High and low protein intakes can inhibit the absorption of magnesium. Food sources of magnesium include dark leafy green vegetables, walnuts, and almonds, pumpkin seeds, black beans, halibut, whole grains, seaweed and cocoa. In terms of supplementation, magnesium citrate is one of the better absorbed forms.

**Cocoa-Almond Balls**

*A relatively healthy holiday cookie.*

- 2 cups finely ground almonds
- 6 oz bittersweet fair-trade chocolate
- 3 Tbsp butter
- ½ cup unpasteurized honey
- 2 eggs
- Fair-trade cocoa for rolling

Melt chocolate with butter in a double boiler, stirring occasionally. Allow to cool. In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs with honey until frothy. Fold in ground almonds until smooth. Fold in chocolate gradually. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Roll into Tbsp sized balls, dust with cocoa. Place on parchment paper lined cookie sheet, and freeze for 15 minutes. Bake at 345°F for 8 mins on top rack, and then move to bottom rack for 8 additional minutes. Remove from oven and cool on sheet for 5 minutes then remove to cooling rack. Enjoy!

Naturopathic Perspectives

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