



## Keep your calm in the super-stress season

The period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day is one of the most stress prone times of the year. Between the holidays, shopping, increased spending, family dynamics, traveling, demands on your time and too much partying, it's the psychological perfect storm. Emotions are in high gear; nerves and tempers can fray easily. Here are a few tips from experts to help you cope with holiday stress:

- **Go in with a plan.** Set a realistic budget and stick to it. Budget your time, too. Prioritize the most important activities.
- **Stick to your routine.** Holidays offer many temptations to overindulge in food and drink and ignore sleep and exercise.
- **Spend time with the people who mean the most.** Prioritize time with your loved ones and limit your exposure to toxic people.
- **Be generous with yourself and with others.** Forgive yourself and forgive others. Perform random acts of unexpected kindness for strangers.
- **Focus on the positive.** Be grateful. Don't push for perfection.
- **Relax.** Plan healthy ways to de-stress in advance: Spending time alone, exercising, reading or meditation can help slow the pace.
- **Have a lifeline.** Remember, if things get to be too much during the season, keep the number to your MAP handy. We're available 24-7-365!

## Healthy Party Eating Tips

'Tis the season of temptations to overindulge. Here are ten tips for healthy holiday dining to help you navigate those big family food extravaganzas.

1. **Go into the dinner with a plan.** Plan for small servings of rich, high calorie foods and go heavier on servings of lower calorie foods like fruits and veggies.
2. **Don't skip meals in advance.** Eat lightly before your big meal. Don't go into a big holiday meal with a ravenous appetite.
3. **Limit finger-food and walk-around snacks.** It's easy to mindlessly eat too many "small bites" while mingling. Sit down to eat and make every bite count in terms of taste, flavor, nutrition and calories.
4. **Make the meal last.** Eat slowly and savor the taste. Take small bites and chew well. Sometimes it can take 15 or 20 minutes before you feel full.
5. **Drink water with your meal.** Sip between bites. It will help you to feel full and will slow you down!
6. **Be moderate about alcohol.** Alcohol is very high in calories! Plus, alcohol stimulates your appetite and can sabotage your plans and willpower for moderation.
7. **Pass on seconds.** Instead, plan to revisit your favorites via leftovers.
8. **Limit sweets.** You don't have to skip desserts, but limit sweets to a small portion of your favorite.
9. **Put food away after the meal is over.** Don't leave food sitting out making it easier to keep picking. Plus, it's much safer to refrigerate or package up foods so they don't spoil.
10. **Plan a post-meal activity.** Do something to get moving and burning off calories after you eat: a walk, a jog, a family game of volleyball, or put on some music and dance!

## Don't let S.A.D. ruin your winter

In the dead of the winter, many people fall into a winter funk. Psychologists have another term: Seasonal Affective Disorder, or S.A.D. for short. Generally, S.A.D. is related to changes in your body chemistry, specifically your serotonin and melatonin levels. Lack of light is deemed to be a big factor. People who suffer from S.A.D. describe feeling listless, anxious and irritable. They often experience low energy levels, sleep disorders, headaches, weight gain, and other symptoms. With treatment, S.A.D. can be managed. Experts suggest that adding light to your environment can help, as can exercising, getting outdoors more often and boosting your Vitamin D intake. If symptoms persist, reach out for help. Remember, you can call to speak to your MAP counselor day or night!

## Holiday shopping safety online & off

If you are shopping for gifts this holiday season, it's important to be prepared for scammers so that you don't get bilked. Whether you are shopping online or "in the real world" there are many criminals trying to separate you from your hard-earned money or trying to steal your identity. Check out advice from the Better Business Bureau: [The 12 Scams of Christmas: What to Look for and How to Avoid Them.](#)