

Skip the “Humbug!” Tips to Relieve Holiday Stress

Few families will match the idyllic images captured in holiday advertisements, but most can find joy during the holiday season. Everyone is encouraged to extend the thankfulness typically associated with Thanksgiving celebrations throughout the holiday season---and into the new year.

Feeling grateful for home, family, friends and life in general spills over into other activities and to others who sense your gratitude. Gratitude itself can have a calming influence.

A little planning also can go a long way in relieving family stress---and holiday stresses. The following time—and stress-management tips are offered:

- **Start early to plan family and other gatherings.**
- **Involve others, so everyone will be informed. Surprises can add stress unnecessarily.**
- **Be responsible. If the family is planning a potluck and you promised to bring the main dish, be on time, with enough food to serve everyone expected.**
- **Ask adult children what they would like to bring, rather than making arbitrary assignments. Let’s face it---a daughter-in-law may enjoy making fruit salad, but not pie crust.**
- **Explain house rules to children.**
- **Leave disciplining others’ children to the children’s parents.**
- **Plan age-appropriate activities, such as soccer or touch football, table or board games.**
- **Keep the peace---try not to bring up touchy subjects.**
- **Don’t overstay---everyone needs his or her own space and time for self.**
- **No family nearby? Call a local chamber of commerce or community service organization and volunteer to help serve a community dinner or give time to a food or toy drive.**

Focus on others, rather than yourself by inviting others to join in a potluck, watch a movie or sports event to share the day. Calling family and friends also can help those who are alone stay connected.

And, if you like---and can---treat yourself to an afternoon off, new book, video or craft project. The dog might like an extra walk, too.