

# Maintain Your **Sanity** During the Holidays



## Holiday Tips

It may be the most wondrous, festive time of year or perhaps, you are not feeling that way at all. Here are some holiday tips to keep the jingle in your bells, and your calm during chaos.

- ◆ **Laughter** Find the humor in common mishaps. Having one of those days when the box of cereal explodes across the kitchen floor, your child does not want to go to school, you are late driving into work and as luck would have it, traffic is backed up, again! What do you do - scream, rage, or laugh? Laugh. Laughter actually decreases stress-related hormones like cortisol and epinephrine and boosts your immune system.<sup>1,2</sup> A hardy laugh will release muscle tension and leave you in a relaxed state.
- ◆ **Step Up the Physical Activity** Carve out time for physical activity instead of putting it on hold. It will give you more energy, help burn off those holiday calories and most importantly lessen holiday tension. Take a short walk after a meal to have a few minutes to yourself or catch up with one relative and come back to the gathering refreshed. Try exercising early in the morning before everyone is awake or promote participating in a family hike or fun run during the holidays.
- ◆ **Let the Past, Stay in the Past** The holidays can be a great time to put old grievances aside and begin anew. Consider setting healthy personal emotional boundaries and at the same time forgiving others. Forgiveness can benefit your physical health and emotional well-being. Holding onto anger and resentment may seem easier than forgiving others, but it is a negative use of energy that can damage your health and take away enjoyment from the moment.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ **Holiday Traditions** Write down the most meaningful holiday traditions you have or make some new ones. Is it music, holiday lights, decorating, surprises, baking, visiting friends or family, volunteering to help others or a sacred spiritual tradition? Sprinkle them throughout three or four weeks.
- ◆ **Deployment Do's** Your holiday traditions may not be what you're used to if you or a close family member is deployed. Encourage family members to express missing their dad, mom, or sibling. Communicate with the family members at home to find ways to include the deployed service member, such as sending letters, crafts, or videos. If you are the family member at home, then holiday responsibilities may fall on your shoulders. Try delegating and asking older children to pitch in, see if a neighbor can help hang the lights, or buy premade items from your local bakery or deli. If you are deployed, you are already doing a great service. To help get in the holiday spirit, contribute to a command event or encourage your unit to share holiday traditions. As you are able, communicate with your family at home and discuss ways to keep the family connected through the holiday season.



For more information, go to NMCPHC Health Promotion and Wellness Navigating Stress webpage: [www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/Pages/navigating-stress.aspx](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/Pages/navigating-stress.aspx)

<sup>1</sup> Strean W. Laughter prescription. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2762283/pdf/0550965.pdf>. Published 2009. Accessed 22 November 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Berk LS, Tan SA, Fry WF, Napier BJ, et al Neuroendocrine and stress hormone changes during mirthful laughter. PubMed.gov. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2556917>. Published December 1989. Accessed 25 November 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Hover M. October 2007 Article of the Month. <http://www.acperesearch.net/oct07.html>. Published August 2007. Accessed 22 Nov 2013.

