


How to practice safe stress

Post-holiday stress during the gloomy days of winter can trigger stress or depression. Dr. E. Christine Moll, a mental health counselor, notes that relationships, finances, and physical demands can trigger stress.

“When stress is at its peak, it’s hard to stop and regroup,” said Dr. Moll. “Take steps to help prevent normal seasonal depression from progressing into chronic depression.” She suggests the following strategies:

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- **Acknowledge your feelings.**
 - **Seek support.** From family and friends or community, religious, or social services. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your social circle.
 - **Be realistic.** Things don’t always stay the same. Find new ways to connect.
 - **Set differences aside.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don’t live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion.
 - **Stick to a budget.** And if holiday bills are mounting, work with a financial counselor to scale that mountain and plan to avoid a similar situation next year.
 - **Learn to say no.**
 - **Keep up your healthy habits.** Make time for exercise.
 - **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself even if it’s just 15 minutes alone. Take a walk, star gaze, listen to music. Read a fascinating book. Slow your breathing and restore calm.
 - **Rethink resolutions.** Don’t resolve to change your whole life to make up for past excess. Instead, try to return to basic, healthy lifestyle routines. Set smaller, more specific goals with a reasonable time frame.
 - **Seek professional help if you need it.** Talk with your doctor or a member of your company’s EAP for a referral to a mental health counselor.