



## Navigating Holiday Stress

The holiday season can be a complex time for many. Joyous gatherings, events, and traditions are often accompanied by emotions such as sadness and grief, leading to heightened stress. According to the American Institute of Stress, 70% of Americans feel stressed during the holidays, often due to factors such as:

- Financial pressures
- Family gatherings
- Expectations to have a perfect holiday
- Travel
- Work obligations

Trying to balance the holiday demands of gifts, parties, family commitments, and more, all while managing regular responsibilities, can quickly become overwhelming. Beyond the hustle and bustle, the holiday season can be especially difficult for those grieving a loss or unable to spend time with their loved ones, further adding to holiday worries. People who experience heightened emotions around the holidays may have a stress response of increased headaches, changes in eating habits, trouble sleeping, or turning to substances to cope.

## Strategies to Practice Gratitude

The holiday season can make it easy to focus on stressors. Directing your attention to what you are grateful for provides an opportunity to prioritize what matters most. Consider these gratitude strategies:

- Express thanks verbally. Saying “thank you” is one of the simplest ways to show appreciation. This small act of kindness can brighten someone else’s day—and yours, too.
- Write thank-you notes or letters. Putting gratitude into words on paper can have lasting and meaningful effects, both for the recipient and for you.
- Reflect privately to practice gratitude. Spending a few quiet minutes each day reflecting on the people, experiences, and simple joys you’re grateful for can help foster a positive mindset.
- Practice meditation or mindfulness. Bring gratitude into mindfulness by focusing on the present moment and acknowledging the positives, no matter how small.
- Begin a gratitude journal. Writing your thoughts down in a gratitude journal allows for deeper reflection and provides an opportunity to revisit what you’re grateful for over time.

## Strategies to Manage Holiday Stress

- Acknowledge your feelings. Give yourself permission to feel what you are feeling and remember that it is normal to have mixed emotions. For example, you might feel both stressed and excited about the holidays at the same time.
- Learn to say “no.” It can be tempting to accept every invitation to parties, gatherings, or social events. Remind yourself that it is okay to say “no,” especially if your health and well-being are being affected by increased stress due to the season.
- Practice healthy habits. The holiday season can make it especially challenging for many to maintain healthy routines. When stress is high, it is even more important to prioritize balanced nutrition, quality sleep, and regular physical activity. These habits help protect your well-being and serve as proactive tools for managing stress.
- Reach out for support. If you’re struggling to manage stress on your own, support is available. Contact your [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\), Inova](#).

## FREE Interactive Webinars ~ Open to all:

- December 17<sup>th</sup> at 12pm EST – **Reflective Journaling** – [REGISTER](#)
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