Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. With some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that comes with the holidays.

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression:

- **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You cannot force yourself to be happy just because it's the holidays.

- **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering to help others is a good way to lift your spirits. Stay in touch with your family and friends through phone calls and greeting cards.

- **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

- **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard. Continue to get plenty of rest and physical activity.

- **Stick to a budget and plan ahead.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Make a specific list for gift shopping and enlist help or order gifts online or through a catalog. Plan your menus and make a shopping list.

- **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, unable to sleep, irritable or hopeless. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Source: [www.MayoClinic.org](http://www.MayoClinic.org)