

Managing the Holidays When You Have Cancer

You may find you have a long list of things to do during the holidays.

You may feel:

- You don't have enough time to do everything on your list.
- Tired!
- Unsure of how you will get through the holiday season.

You are not alone! Everyone has stress in their lives. It can help to stop stress before it starts. This isn't always possible. You may find it helpful to do things that help you feel more relaxed. This can help you reduce your stress during the holidays.

What you can do to help yourself



Make lists

When you have a lot to do, it can be hard to know what to do first. You may find it hard to remember all you need to do. It can help to make a list of these things. When you make a list, include the things you have to do, want to do and feel you should do. This can help you decide what things you will do and when you will do them. You may choose not to do some of the things on your list. For example, is it more important to have the tree decorated, have the lights on the house or have the wreath on the door? It can help to make a list of the gifts you need to buy before you go shopping.



Helpful reminders

Leave yourself a note to remind you of what you need to do. For example, if you have to pick up the turkey in the morning, put a note where you are sure to see it. Do this the night before.



Ask for help

You don't have to be the one to do everything. Ask others to help with things you need to do. For example, you could suggest having a pot-luck holiday dinner. This way you don't have to cook the entire meal.



Take a break

Take a 2 to 10 minute break every hour. This will increase your energy and lower your stress level. Use this time to do some stretches, breathing exercises or go for a walk.



Make back up plans

You may not be able to do all the things you planned. Your plans may have to change. It can help to make back-up plans in advance. For example, what if you can't find the perfect purse to give your friend? What else can you get for her?



Enjoy the moment

Don't think about things that may happen in the future. Think about what you are doing now. Enjoy what you are able to do now. For example, think about how your family and friends enjoyed the meal you prepared for them.



Write down your thoughts and feelings

Write down your thoughts and feelings in a notebook or journal. This can help you let your feelings out. It can also help you look at problems in a different way. For example, if you are worried about hosting the holiday dinner it can help write down how you feel about doing it. This may help you think about what you might do differently.



Plan time to care for yourself

Plan to do things you like to do. For example, if you enjoy listening to music, plan to have someone take you to a concert or to a church service.



Talk to someone about what you are worried about

It may help to talk to someone about your worries. You may want to talk to a friend you trust or see a counsellor. Talking about your worries or concerns with someone may help you decide what you can do to help yourself. For example, is Aunt Hilda coming to the holiday dinner? Are you worried about how unpleasant she always is? You can't control Aunt Hilda, how she feels and what she says. It can help to talk with a friend or counsellor about your feelings. This can help you focus on what you can control.



Think positive thoughts

How you think can increase your level of stress. You can become more stressed when you think negative thoughts. This is also called negative self-talk. Thinking positive thoughts can reduce your stress level. Pay attention to the images and thoughts in your head. To reduce your stress, talk to yourself in a positive way. You may find this will make you feel calm and less stressed. This can help you deal with a situation better. For example, a good friend forgets to send you a Christmas card. This may upset you and make you feel stressed. You may think "this means my friend doesn't care about me". It can help to think about this situation in a different way. You can say "maybe the card is late. I've sent late cards before. The card will likely come in the mail later this week. If I don't get one, it's not the end of the world".



Distract yourself

Distracting yourself with thoughts and activities that give you enjoyment may help. This can help reduce your stress level. For example, use mental activities, such as recalling the words of a song or completing a crossword puzzle or playing a computer game while you wait for family to arrive for your holiday celebration.



Relaxation exercises

Relaxation exercises can help you feel calm and relaxed. This can help reduce your stress level. For example, you can sit in a comfortable chair and do an exercise where you relax the muscles in your body. You can also do some breathing exercises.

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