

## **1. Understanding Holiday Stress**

The holidays often come with joy and connection—but also increased demands, emotional triggers, financial strain, and overloaded schedules. Proactively planning can help transform stress into balance.

### **Why Stress Increases This Time of Year**

- Higher expectations (family, work, social)
- Increased financial demands
- Overcommitting and lack of downtime
- Workload spikes before year-end
- Family dynamics, grief, or loneliness
- Travel fatigue and schedule disruptions

### **Common Signs of Holiday Stress**

- Irritability or overwhelm
- Trouble concentrating
- Fatigue or low motivation
- Sleep disruptions
- Tension headaches, muscle tightness
- Avoidance or withdrawal
- Emotional sensitivity (tearfulness, frustration)

## **The Psychology Behind Holiday Pressure**

### **Internal Factors**

- Perfectionism
- Fear of disappointing others
- Emotional triggers from past holidays
- Pressure to “make it magical”

### **External Factors**

- Social media comparison



- Workplace deadlines
- Cultural/family expectations
- Unpredictable family interactions

## Workplace Holiday Stress

### Work-Related Stressors

- End-of-year deadlines
- Project wrap-ups
- Reduced staffing / increased workload
- Company gatherings or social pressure

### Strategies for a Calmer Work Season

- **Clarify priorities:** What must be done vs. what is “nice to do.”
- **Communicate early:** Set expectations with your team.
- **Block “focus time”:** Protect concentration windows.
- **Take micro-breaks:** 2–5 minutes of movement or breathing.
- **Share the load:** Delegate or collaborate where possible.
- **Use EAP resources:** Coaching, counseling, financial tools.

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## 2. Clear, Positive Communication

- **Be direct yet kind:** Express your needs with warmth and clarity.
- **Use “I” statements:** “I feel overwhelmed when the calendar is full” vs. “You’re planning too much.”
- **Practice active listening:** Reflect what others say before responding.
- **Check tone and timing:** Choose calm moments for sensitive conversations.

### At Work

- “My plate is full — which task should be prioritized?”
- “I can complete this after the holidays; is that OK?”



- “I need clarity on expectations for this project.”

### **At Home**

- “Let’s divide responsibilities so we can all enjoy the day.”
  - “I’m not comfortable discussing that topic during the holidays.”
  - “I want this to be enjoyable — can we simplify our plans?”
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## **3. Boundaries That Protect Your Peace**

- **Say no without guilt:** You’re allowed to decline events or traditions that drain you.
- **Create buffer time:** Between activities for recovery and rest.
- **Protect your time and space:** Designate quiet zones or hours in your day.

### **Healthy Boundary Examples**

- Time: “We can stay for one hour.”
- Emotional: “I’m not discussing politics today.”
- Financial: “We’re exchanging small gifts only.”
- Energy: “I’m keeping this weekend free for rest.”

### **Boundary Tips**

- Be clear and calm.
- Use “I” statements.
- Limit explanations — clarity doesn’t require justification.

### **Conflict Prevention Strategies**

- Identify your triggers
- Decide ahead which topics are off-limits
- Practice a consistent exit strategy (“I need a quick break.”)

### **During Conflict**

- Breathe before responding
- Take space
- Stay factual, not emotional



- Let go of “winning” the conversation

### After Conflict

- Debrief with a supportive person
  - Release the expectation of perfect harmony
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## 4. Hosting Without Burnout

- **Simplify traditions:** Choose meaningful, manageable events over perfection.
  - **Co-create plans:** Ask guests to contribute dishes or activities.
  - **Prepare ahead:** Use checklists and prep meals in advance.
  - **Designate “you time”:** Even when hosting, step away briefly for grounding.
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## 5. Managing Expectations

- **Accept imperfection:** Release pressure to create the “perfect” holiday.
  - **Align with your values:** Focus on what really matters—connection, not consumption.
  - **Communicate expectations early:** About travel, gifts, visits, etc.
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## 6. Travel and Logistics

- **Plan early, flexibly:** Build in wiggle room for delays.
  - **Pack mindfully:** Include stress relief tools (e.g., journal, music, book).
  - **Take breaks:** Stretch and breathe during travel to reduce tension.
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## 7. Gifting and Financial Management

- **Set a firm budget:** And stick to it—communicate boundaries with loved ones.
- **Give experiences or time:** Homemade coupons, acts of service, or quality time.
- **Use group gifting apps: Split costs for larger gifts with others.**
- **Use the “4-Gift Rule”** for children: want?need?wear?read;
- **Avoid impulse buying** — use a 24-hour pause.
- **Discuss limits** openly with family.



- **Track spending:** Use apps to monitor in real time (see below).
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## 8. Overloaded by Parties and Events?

- **Pick your priorities:** Don't say yes to everything.
  - **Decline with grace:** "Thank you so much, I'm keeping things quiet this year."
  - **Schedule downtime:** After busy events, build in recharging time.
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## 9. Caring for Your Inner World

- **Pause daily for self-check-ins:** "How am I feeling today?"
  - **Use grounding techniques:** Deep breathing, stretching, journaling.
  - **Limit comparison:** Especially on social media. Celebrate your unique season.
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## 10. Managing Emotions Effectively

- **Label emotions:** "This is sadness" vs. "I shouldn't feel this way."
- **Create safe outlets:** Talk to a trusted friend, coach, or therapist.
- **Honor grief or loneliness:** Light a candle, write a letter, share a memory.

### Daily Micro-Relief Practices

- 4-7-8 breathing
- Step outside for fresh air
- A 5-minute stretch or walk
- A warm drink without distractions
- Music, humor, or grounding exercises
- Journaling for 3–5 minutes

### Deeper Rest Practices

- Digital time-outs
- Lower-stimulus evenings
- Yoga, meditation, or prayer
- Reconnecting with personal values
- Asking for help when needed



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## 11. Daily Positivity & Affirmations

- “I choose peace over pressure.”
- “This season can be joyful in my own way.”
- “I release what I can’t control and focus on what I can.”
- Use sticky notes or phone reminders for affirmations.

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## 12. Rest, Rhythm & Relief

- **Protect your sleep:** Wind down with rituals like tea, books, or a bath.
- **Move your body:** Short walks or dance breaks help regulate emotions.
- **Nourish daily:** Eat regular, balanced meals to maintain energy and mood.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Notice what’s going well, however small.

### One-Minute Resets

- Count 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear
- Box breathing
- Drop your shoulders + unclench your jaw
- Drink a full glass of water

### Five-Minute Resets

- Step outside
- Stretch your back and hips
- Guided breathing on Calm/Insight Timer
- Write a quick gratitude list

### Ten-Minute Resets

- Mindful walk
  - Declutter one small area
  - Listen to a favorite song playlist
  - Body scan relaxation
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## Book Recommendations

- The Art of Extreme Self-Care – Cheryl Richardson
  - Set Boundaries, Find Peace – Nedra Glover Tawwab
  - Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle – Emily & Amelia Nagoski
  - The Little Book of Hygge – Meik Wiking
  - Radical Acceptance – Tara Brach
  - The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker
  - The Book of No by Susan Newman
  - The Gifts of Imperfection – Brené Brown
  - The Happiness Trap – Russ Harris
  - Set Boundaries, Find Peace – Nedra Glover Tawwab
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## App Recommendations

- **Calm:** For meditation, sleep stories, and breathing exercises
  - **Headspace or calm:** Daily mindfulness and stress-reduction
  - **Mint or You Need a Budget (YNAB):** Financial planning and budgeting
  - **Reflectly:** Daily journal prompts and mood tracking
  - **Insight Timer:** Guided meditations and grounding practices
  - **Strides** – Habit and stress-management tracking
  - **Cozi:** Shared family calendar and holiday planning
  - **Trello:** Task and planning boards
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## Personal “Holiday Well-Being Plan

Use these prompts to build your own plan:

### My Top Priorities This Season Are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



### What I Will Let Go Of This Year:

- \_\_\_\_\_

### My Boundary for Work:

- \_\_\_\_\_

### My Boundary for Family:

- \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Things That Help Me Reset:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
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### Final Thoughts

You deserve a season of peace, not pressure. Set your pace, honor your needs, and focus on moments that nourish your well-being—at home and at work.

Contact Bree Health for more total well-being tools.

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