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At-Home Wellness Tips To Alleviate Holiday Stress

By Gordana Velaja December 15, 2022

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At-Home Wellness Tips To Alleviate Holiday Stress

(Newswire.net (<https://newswire.net/>) -- December 15, 2022) -- For many people, the holidays present a stressful, yet celebratory time. Trying to make a memorable, if not magical, experience for others can mean a lot of pressure. In addition to fulfilling one's normal responsibilities, this season brings a myriad of new chores, such as writing holiday letters, mailing cards, buying presents, wrapping them, and hosting parties in newly-cleaned spaces.

"Self-care shouldn't be an afterthought at any time of year," said Crystal Bethea, holistic wellness expert, and owner of C3 Wellness Spa (<https://c3wellness.com/>). "The good news is that there are quick and easy ways to eliminate stress and start enjoying this special season."

Identifying physical and mental signs of stress

Both physical and mental signs can indicate stress. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/cope-with-stress/index.html>) (CDC), mental signs include "feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration," as well as "difficulty concentrating and making decisions." Stress can also cause negative moods, leading people to become irritable.

"Addictive behaviors can signal stress as well," Bethea said. "If you find yourself reaching for your guilty pleasures more often than usual, then you could be depending on them as a coping mechanism. These include not only drugs and alcohol but also sugar and specific foods."

Eating as a coping mechanism can lead to weight gain, which was the first physical sign of stress that Bethea named. *"Conversely, some people stop eating when stressed," she added, "so a loss of appetite can also be a red flag."*

According to the CDC, other physical signs of stress include "changes in... energy, desires, and interests," "nightmares or problems sleeping," "physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, or skin rashes," and "worsening of chronic health problems."

To cope with these difficulties, the CDC recommends a variety of methods for alleviating stress. Among these are "take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate," and "make time to unwind."

"There's no one best way to implement this advice," Bethea said. "A wide variety of breathing, stretching, and massage techniques combat stress effectively. The important thing is to experiment with some and find the ones that work best for you."

Breathing to relieve stress

Researchers at Harvard (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/you-can-practice-mindfulness-in-as-little-as-15-minutes-a-day>) have found that meditating for even just 10 to 15 minutes a day can eliminate stress. They recommend incorporating short guided meditations, body scans, or yoga poses into your day.

"Stress-busting activities don't have to require a lot of time or effort," Bethea confirmed. "You would be surprised how quickly you can feel a difference from simple breathwork exercises — some even take less than a minute."

Betha recommends one such exercise called 4-7-8 breathing: "To do it, all you have to do is get comfortable, either sitting or laying down. Breathe in through your mouth for a count of four, then count to seven while holding your breath. Finally, release it for a count of eight."

According to WebMD (<https://www.webmd.com/balance/what-to-know-4-7-8-breathing>), 4-7-8 breathing triggers the "relaxation response." Beginners should only try four rounds of this breathing in a row, while more experienced practitioners can work up to eight rounds.

Stretching to relieve stress

According to the Columbine Health Systems Center for Healthy Aging (<https://www.research.colostate.edu/healthyagingcenter/2021/06/23/the-simple-act-of-stretching/#:~:text=Stretching%20reduces%20the%20muscle%20tension,decrease%20in%20depression%20and%20anxiety>) at Colorado State University, "Stretching has been shown to increase serotonin levels — i.e., the hormone that helps stabilize our mood, reduce stress, and overall makes us feel good — which causes a decrease in depression and anxiety." Stretching has lots of additional benefits as well, such as increasing flexibility and range of motion. It also improves circulation and blood flow.

"Stretching exercises can also help you relax in as little as one minute," Bethea said. "If you are seated in a chair for much of the day, try pausing to roll your shoulders forward and back. Rotating your head in one direction and then the other is another quick, effective stretch."

Bethea emphasizes proper technique when stretching. "Don't push yourself," she said. "If you feel any kind of pain, then it's a sign that you're trying to stretch too far." She advises spending the same amount of time on both sides for each stretch. "When you're done, your body should feel relaxed and balanced," she said.

Massage to relieve stress

"I consider visceral massage to be the gold standard of holistic therapy," Bethea said.

According to an article in Greatist (<https://greatist.com/health/visceral-manipulation>), visceral massage, which is also called visceral manipulation, is "a hands-on therapy that focuses on your organs [in] your abdomen. The goal is to relieve tension, improve connective tissue mobility, and encourage better digestive function." It can also relieve back pain and soothe menstrual cramps.

"Since organs and emotions are all tied together, directly ringing out the abdominal area could be just the reset needed," Bethea said.

Using aromatherapy to relieve stress

According to Johns Hopkins (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/aromatherapy-do-essential-oils-really-work>), aromatherapy is "the practice of using essential oils for therapeutic benefit" that "has been used for centuries."

"There are thousands of essential oils that can be used for many conditions and ailments, including stress relief," Bethea said. "Halo therapy (salt) really helps open up the lungs, which allows for better flow that results in you calming down."

Bethea also recommends lavender essential oil, which she calls "the mother of all oils." "It's an adaptogen (<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/drugs/22361-adaptogens>) that has been clinically proven to alleviate signs of depression and stress," she explained.

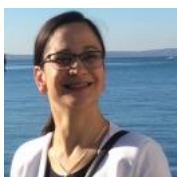
Bethea emphasized that no matter which way you choose to relieve stress, the important thing is to take time for yourself. "This holiday season, don't forget to pause and be present," she said. "That's the best way to make memories that will last a lifetime."

Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/blog-post/00251716-at-home-wellness-tips-to-alleviate-holiday-stress.html> (<http://newswire.net/newsroom/blog-post/00251716-at-home-wellness-tips-to-alleviate-holiday-stress.html>)

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