

A man with a beard is sitting on a grey couch, looking thoughtfully to the right. He is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and dark jeans. To his right is a decorated Christmas tree with various ornaments, including a swan. The background is dark and out of focus.

## TIPS FOR DEALING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

The holiday season sometimes brings on stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present an array of demands such as parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. Below are a few practical tips, you can use to minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

**Set realistic expectations.** It is healthy to share in the holiday spirit by giving gifts, donating time and money to your favorite charities and celebrating with family, friends and coworkers. It is also important not to get overwhelmed by the pressure to make this year's holidays the best ever. Set realistic expectations for gifts and holiday activities. Instead of trying to take on everything, identify the most important holiday tasks and take small steps to accomplish them.

**Know yourself.** Be aware of what causes you stress during the holidays. People experience stress in different ways and may have a hard time concentrating or making decisions, feel angry, irritable or out of control. This may result in you experiencing headaches, muscle tension or a lack of energy. Learn your own stress signals.

**Take care of yourself.** Eat right, get plenty of sleep, drink plenty of water and engage in regular physical activity. It may seem a challenge with so much to do this time of year, but taking care of yourself during the holidays helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with stress. No matter how busy life gets, make time for yourself, even if it's just reading a good book, listening to your favorite music or taking a short walk.

**Ask for support.** Accepting help from your supportive friends and family can improve your ability to manage stress. Use the holidays to reconnect with friends and family and strengthen your support network. If you continue to feel overwhelmed, you may want to talk to your physician.