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# Holiday Stress

*Managing the Holidays for you and your children*



Presented by Dr. Michael Osit

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## What We Will Cover

- Source of holiday stress
- Complicating situations-loss of loved one, Divorce, Blended Family
- Proactive strategies
- Identifying stress
- Strategies for coping
- Signs of stress in children
- Tips for helping children cope
- Special needs children

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## Holiday Stress

The holidays can be filled with happiness and joy

Or

They can be riddled with stress, anxiety and depression

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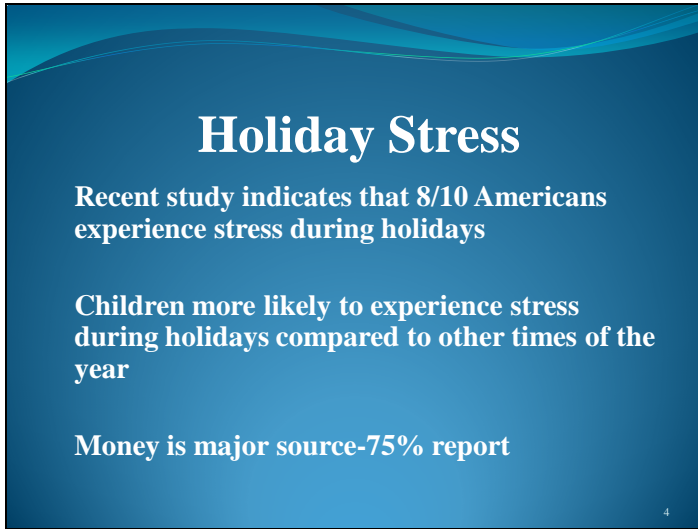
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**Holiday Stress**

Recent study indicates that 8/10 Americans experience stress during holidays

Children more likely to experience stress during holidays compared to other times of the year

Money is major source-75% report

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**Sources of Holiday Blues**

- Holidays can remind you of unresolved family issues
- Holidays can remind you of a painful childhood
- Feelings of sadness, loneliness, or depression prior to the holidays can be magnified in an effort to maintain “holiday cheer.”
- Loss of a loved one
- Unrealistic expectations from family, friends and yourself
- Being away from family or friends
- Feeling isolated from others

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**Sources of Holiday Blues**

- A great deal of social demands (social anxiety)
- Pressure of gift giving
- Hectic schedules
- Coping with store and mall crowds

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## Complicating Issues

- On-going financial challenges
- Significant change in financial situation
- Families in process of divorce
- Divorced families
- Blended families
- Lost a loved one

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## Be Proactive

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## Gift Giving

- Shop early-there will be more selections
- Ask the recipient of the gift what they want
- Establish and stick to your budget

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## Managing Your Time

- Simplify your holiday and commitments
- Make sure you allot time to yourself to do things you enjoy
- Balance giving and receiving-give to yourself
- Schedule smart
- Be planful and realistic with your commitments
- Don't over-schedule
- Be flexible with your schedule

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## Maintain Health

- Avoid overeating before the holiday
- Avoid over drinking before the holiday
- Do not starving yourself in preparation for overeating
- Exercise and watch your diet
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep

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## Generally . . .

- Manage your time well
- Set priorities
- Be realistic with your goals
- Don't spend too much time planning
- Share the responsibility; ask family members to help out
- Take time to finish tasks that are important to you
- Rest when you need to-listen to your body

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## Signs of Stress

- Irritability or anger
- Continuous feelings of sadness
- Social withdrawal
- Increase sensitivity to rejection
- Changes in appetite -either increased or decreased
- Changes in sleep-sleeplessness or excessive sleep
- Less tolerance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and low energy
- Physical complaints such as stomach aches & headaches that don't respond to treatment
- Reduced ability to function during events and activities at home or with friends, and in other hobbies or interests
- Impaired thinking or concentration

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## Affect On Children

- Routines are disrupted
- They have expectations
- School stress-all comes to a head
- Disruption in sleep patterns
- Disruption in eating-what and when they eat
- Travel
- Reacting to parents experiencing stress
- Attending parties

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## Signs of Stress in Children

- Irritability or anger
- Continuous feelings of sadness
- Social withdrawal
- Increase sensitivity to rejection
- Changes in appetite -either increased or decreased
- Changes in sleep-sleeplessness or excessive sleep
- Vocal outburst or crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and low energy
- Physical complaints such as stomach aches & headaches that don't respond to treatment
- Decreased in academic functioning
- Decrease in interest in attending extracurricular activities
- Increase in screen activities and isolation from the family
- Impaired thinking or concentration

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## Coping With Holiday Stress

- Try something new-change something
- Spend time with people you care about
- Spend the holidays the way YOU want to, not what others want you to do
- Volunteer your time to help others
- Stay active, maintain your social life

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## Coping With Holiday Stress

- Breathe
- Use your partner to talk about your feelings
- Seek help if you need it
- Give to yourself
- Shop smart
- Focus on the joy and meaning of the holiday either religiously or family togetherness

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## Coping With Holiday Stress

- Maintain perspective
- Use self talk
- Challenge and attack irrational, unhelpful beliefs with realistic, true thoughts

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**Examples**

**I will never be able to finish shopping and get everything done in time for the holidays.**

**I always manage to get it done in time. I can plan it all out on a calendar to make sure it is done.**

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**Examples**

**I can't enjoy the holiday since my mother died**

**I miss her but I am surrounded by my whole family. She would want me to enjoy my family and the holiday.**

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**Examples**

**I can't afford to buy my children what they want.**

**I will make it happy for them. I will help them learn to appreciate what they receive, not what they didn't get.**

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## Tips for children

- Set a calm example-model
- Keep schedule under control
- Recognize signs of stress so you can make adjustments
- Get them to talk about their feelings
- Use good judgment, if they are tired or hungry, don't push them to go places
- Reinstate routines whenever possible
- Fresh air and exercise
- Avoid over scheduling
- Get them to help you
- Schedule down or quiet time
- Remind them what the holidays are really about
- Have family meetings
- Use your judgment as to whether or not you put gifts out prior to the holiday

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## Tips for Teachers

- Be careful not to hype the holiday by over discussing and referring to it
- As the winter break approaches, provide some fun learning activities that deviate from your normal classroom routines
- If your class is exceptionally hyped up for the holidays, provide a 10-15 minute "Holiday Talk" so all can share what they planning for their winter break.
- Contain the discussion and focus to these brief discussions, providing limits and structure to holiday focus.
- Create a class project that involves active involvement for each student for a community service or social action project

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## Special Circumstances: First Holiday

- Loss of a loved one
- Serious illness
- Separation
- Divorce
- Legal issues
- Financial limitations
- New financial limitations

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## Special Circumstances: First Holiday

- Try to focus on the positive
- Acknowledge, don't ignore, the circumstance
- Try to maintain perspective
- Set aside personal conflicts
- Help kids, and each other, understand the limitations financially, without creating undue alarm or fear
- Think about what your loved one would wanted for your holiday

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## Special needs children

- Pay close attention
- Magnify attention to coping strategies for children
- Routines especially important
- Sleep, eat, physical activity
- Do not overwhelm them with schedules or presents

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## Enjoy . . .

Appreciate . . .

Do not take anything for granted

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**Happy Holidays**

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