

# As holidays return to normal, here's how to de-stress

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A return to a more normal holiday season may also mean higher stress

levels, so an expert offers some coping tips.

Don't get too focused on buying the perfect presents, making the best dinner or planning the perfect party. Try to be mindful of pleasant things and moments, suggested Jennifer Wegmann, a health and wellness studies lecturer at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

"Being mindful requires you to be present and aware. It is impossible to be in the moment when you are focused on what is next or stuck in could have, would have, should have," Wegmann said in a university news release.

"Being mindful requires intentionality, so try an easy breathing exercise next time you find yourself mindlessly going through your day," she suggested. "Few things bring us into the moment like our breath. There are so many techniques out there, but something as simple as taking several deep breaths can be effective."

Try to adopt an attitude of gratitude, she advised.

"Gratitude is more than simply being thankful," Wegmann said. It requires intentionally seeking goodness in your life and understanding that goodness comes from both inside and outside of ourselves, she explained.

"Gratitude is a powerful positive emotion, and science shows when we practice [gratitude](#), we experience numerous benefits. It improves [sleep habits](#), cultivates happiness, reduces the [stress hormone cortisol](#) and improves [mental health](#)," Wegmann said. "A great exercise we can all do is to take a little time in the next few weeks to reflect upon what and who we are truly and genuinely thankful for. Being grateful will help us see the holidays through a different lens. I encourage everyone to find a

way to let people in your life know you are grateful for them and why."

It's also important to set healthy boundaries by not saying yes to every party, dinner, present or other holiday request, she added.

"First, reflect on what your boundaries are. Surprisingly, many people can't tell you their boundaries because they have never given themselves time to think about them," Wegmann said.

"Once you acknowledge what your boundaries are, you need to communicate them assertively and directly. Remember, you can be assertive without forgoing compassion and kindness. If you do not communicate your boundaries, then you can't expect people to respect them," she explained.

"You can anticipate that some people may be taken aback by your boundaries, but remember that you are not responsible for others' actions," she said. "Do not fall into the trap of believing that setting a boundary is selfish. It's an act of self-love, as it acknowledges your self-worth."

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers [holiday health tips](#).

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