

## Managing Holiday Stress

The holiday season can be a joyful time, particularly for those who will spend it with their family and friends. However, for many, this season also brings an added burden. With both work and personal responsibilities, many professionals are unprepared for the stress that the holiday season brings, and few know just how to manage their work-life balance.

“I think the biggest challenge during this time is balance, and finding the time to deal with all of the normal work responsibilities that we have all year long, as well as the added responsibilities of entertaining and gift buying,” said Kathy Gruver, PhD, a health and wellness expert who specializes in stress and founder of [The Alternative Medicine Cabinet](#).

In addition, with a number of days off to celebrate the various holidays, individuals are often left trying to complete five days’ worth of work in three days’ time.

“For some companies I think the work decreases around this time, but for a lot it stays exactly the same,” said Gruver. “While holiday breaks are great, you still have to accomplish the same amount of work in fewer days.”

### Managing Personal Stress

To successfully manage holiday stress, individuals must be proactive and avoid procrastination that may lead to further stress.

“If you know you are going to be busy around the holidays, managing that ahead of time and really planning for the time off you will be taking will help a great deal,” said Gruver. “The earlier you start, the better. Making lists and being organized will also be important in managing responsibilities.”

Learning to say no to added responsibilities is also key. While we cannot always say no at work, individuals can say no to holiday events or travel that will keep them away from the office for extended periods of time.

“The external stress of the holidays is something that we cannot control,” said Gruver. “What we can control is our reaction to it. This is where things like breathing and meditation and words of affirmation come in. This will be incredibly important in helping to manage your response to stress, because it’s really all you can do.”

### Alleviating Employee Stress

While successfully managing holiday stress is ultimately up the individual, employers can also play a key role in alleviating some of this pressure. For instance, if employers notice that their team is scrambling to meet a January 1 deadline, pushing this back to January 15 may give individuals the time they need to complete the project professionally, while alleviating stress.

Providing time to manage outside responsibilities may also go a long way in reducing the overall burden on employees.

“One suggestion for management, if they have the wherewithal to do so, is to provide their team with dedicated time to accomplish any holiday shopping,” said Gruver. “A realistic manager might realize that their employees

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are probably spending part of their day doing this anyway, so giving them permission to do for an allotted period of time could end up making them more productive during the rest of the workday, and perhaps the holiday season.”

While ultimately managing stress is dependent on the individual organization or personality, implementing a few of these tips may go a long way in overcoming holiday stress this season.