



SAVVY TIPS FOR A STRESS-FREE FESTIVE SEASON

The festive season is a great time to be with family, have a break, and enjoy good food and good company, but often it can be less jolly and more stressful. Why is this time of year so often accompanied by feelings of stress, anxiety and exhaustion? It may be the extra social engagements, big gatherings, seeing family with whom we don't necessarily see 'eye-to-eye'. It's also easy to overindulge and overspend during the so-called 'silly season'.

Consider these strategies for a stress-free festive season:

Setting boundaries

The festive season is a time of giving, but sometimes we give so much (time, energy, money) that we no longer take care of ourselves. Feel like you must be involved in all the family events or get gifts for everyone? Worried about being saddled with all the meal prep? Setting boundaries will help you navigate these stressful situations. Having boundaries doesn't mean that you don't care about others. Healthy boundaries enable you to care for others and yourself.

Work out in advance what you are comfortable with in terms of:

- how you want to spend your time
- who and what you want to prioritise
- how much money you are willing to spend
- what and how much you eat and drink
- which holiday traditions you think are important.



Jingle all the way (to the bank)

Festive gifting can be an emotional and financial strain. Instead of individual gifts for family, friends and colleagues, each person can draw one name and buy only that person a gift of a certain value. Parents could club together to get teachers gift vouchers while families could buy gifts for the children only. Use a spreadsheet or a gift-list app to help you keep track of your spending.

Hosting a fancy dinner, splurging on a holiday, a night on the town or shopping spree, can make a dent in your financial freedom. Set a budget before you get sucked into holiday overspending. For example, rather than catering fully, ask everyone to bring a dish and drinks. Take your evening-out budget in cash and, once that's spent, it's time to go home.

'Tis the season to be healthy

You don't have to forgo your seasonal delights. Just make sure you eat healthy for the rest of the time, avoid skipping meals to 'make space' for a big festive lunch or dinner, and stick to small portions of the treats. Get moving by taking walks or playing indoor or outdoor games.



Be summer safe

With most of us in the southern hemisphere, it's important to be sun smart during the festive season heat. Keep hydrated with water (not alcohol, as it makes you more dehydrated). Lower your risk of harmful exposure to direct sunlight by:

- avoiding the sun at the hottest times of day (10am to 3pm)
- always wearing a sunhat
- protecting the eyes with sunglasses with a UV protection rating of UV400
- re-applying sunscreen every two hours.

So, set those boundaries, follow these tips and stick to them – it's the best gift you can give yourself and everyone around you.

Remember that your employee wellness programme offers free and confidential services such as trauma support and counselling, medical and wellness advice, financial and family care advice.

References

Brené Brown
Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)

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Let us stay mindful of caring for one another and ourselves

