

## MDS Alert

### Stress Buster: 5 Tips Alleviate Your Stress This Holiday Season

**Get into the spirit of giving -- without undue stress on your psyche or your wallet.**

The holidays often come with obligations, not just to family and friends, but also to co-workers and customers. Before you become overwhelmed, consider the many ways you can celebrate at work without feeling harried or resentful. If you prepare more efficiently and remember some vital tips, you can be on your way to a more enjoyable holiday time in the office, minus an empty bank account and an irritable attitude that may get you in trouble with your co-workers and customers.

**Check out these five expert tips below:**

**1. Know your budget.** "Be reasonable about your gift giving this year," says **Dorothy Cantor**, president of the American Psychological Foundation, principal of the Leadership Equation Institute and owner of a private practice in Westfield, N.J.

Do you have to give gifts to everyone in the office or can you give them just a small token? Ask yourself if you are pushing beyond your means. "Better yet, get together and talk to the co-workers in your gift giving circle and decide now what your limits will be so that everyone's expectations are lowered to a more reasonable level," says Cantor.

**2. Create limits.** If you're working full-time, you need to decide how much entertaining you can do within and outside of the office without becoming exhausted. If you set some limits ahead of time, such as only attending parties on the weekend, you will have a greater sense of control. "The more you feel like you have some control over your life instead of it getting away from you, the less stress you will feel," adds Cantor. "And don't be afraid to set limits and say, 'No, I just can't do that.'"

**3. Allow feelings.** Are you not feeling terribly happy about the holidays because of some reason or another? "That's okay," says Cantor. "Obviously, if you are working in a medical office, you have to keep up a certain amount of a front--you're interacting with the public and have a job to do--but that doesn't mean that you can't really be feeling something else." Also, don't always assume that everyone else is cheery either. That way, you won't feel disappointed or stressed when other people aren't happy, and you'll also be more empathetic toward customers who come in and are feeling stressed as well.

**4. Keep notes.** "As this holiday season goes by, keep notes of what has irritated or stressed you out the most so that you can attack and better plan for next year," Cantor says. Put the notes on your calendar or in your journal, "because we tend to be creatures of habit and we tend to repeat the same things over and over unless we make an extremely conscious effort to do things differently." You can then share your findings with your co-workers if you find that they aren't sticking to limits or respecting yours.

**5. Be honest with yourself.** If you try to prepare but find you are still getting stressed out, sit back and evaluate: Where is the stress coming from? What can I do to scale back? You'll be surprised by what you may discover.