



How to Reduce Holiday Stress and Stay Focused

By Kelly Spors

The holidays—as merry as they may be—can also be mayhem for small-business owners and their employees, creating holiday stress. Retailers may be swarming with customers and online orders while other businesses may be scrambling to finish up projects before the end of the calendar year. On top of all the extra chaos at work, many people are also juggling holiday-related personal demands, whether shopping for gifts, cooking, parties or family gatherings.

In fact, according to holiday stress statistics from the [American Psychological Association](#), nearly two-thirds of Americans report feeling extra stress or fatigue often or sometimes around the holidays.

How can you keep stress levels manageable at your business and stay focused over the busy holiday season? Here are some holiday stress tips:

- **Hire temporary workers to relieve your staffing needs.** Before the rush sets in, take a realistic look at your holiday staffing needs. If it seems like you or your staff will be crunched, consider hiring temporary employees to lighten your workload—whether that’s hiring someone to answer the phone, stock shelves or assist with year-end bookkeeping. Placing an ad on Craigslist or a job board such as [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) or [CareerBuilder.com](https://www.careerbuilder.com) can be a good way to line up some extra part-time help. It will also relieve your permanent staff and prevent them from having to work overtime when they’re already stretched thin.
- **Keep your schedule as light as possible.** Avoid planning unnecessary employee events and business meetings around the holidays. Chances are, unexpected tasks and errands will spring up, and you’ll appreciate the extra time. If possible, hold meetings in early January or early December so you and your staff doesn’t feel overbooked right before Thanksgiving or Christmas when they’re already busy managing their personal affairs. Moreover, keep holiday parties to a minimum. One employee gathering is often sufficient; more may be overwhelming.
- **Get enough sleep and exercise.** It can be tempting to try and get by on less sleep or forgo your fitness routine around the holidays. But that’s probably the worst thing you can do. Rather, during hectic and stressful periods you need sleep and exercise the most to keep your stress levels in check. According to the Mayo Clinic, adults need [seven to eight hours of sleep per night](#) and [at least 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity](#), along with some strength training. Force yourself to keep it up.
- **Write to-do lists.** Staying organized and prioritizing tasks may be especially important when managing holiday stress. Robert C. Pozen, a senior lecturer at Harvard Business School, recommends [writing a to-do list](#) the night before so you can jump on it early in the day, according to *Fast Company*. Moreover, Pozen recommends only putting must-do items for that day on the list—so you’re not filling your time with things that can be done at another time. Keep in mind that you shouldn’t overwhelm yourself with too many commitments or tasks around the holidays. Rather, cut yourself and your employees some slack.
- **Show appreciation.** Don’t lose sight of the holiday spirit, even if your schedule is crammed. Take the time to give your staff extra encouragement and praise—which they may especially need during the hectic holiday season. Consider giving them some flexibility to run personal errands during the workday. Give them a holiday bonus or gift that shows appreciation. Keep the atmosphere positive and lighthearted. Remember that the holidays are meant to

be a time of gratefulness and good cheer—and you and your employees probably need it that time of year more than ever

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