



# December 2023: Stress and the Holidays



***“Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax.” – Mark Black***

Welcome to the December 2023 edition of ***TotalWellbeing***, your guide to the ***8 dimensions of wellbeing***. This month discuss stress awareness and ways you can help stay more relaxed this holiday season.

In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, stress often becomes a constant companion, impacting both our physical and mental well-being. It is crucial, however, to recognize the significance of stress awareness and the necessity of carving out moments for self-care. Amidst the demands of work, family, and various responsibilities, acknowledging the impact of stress on our health is the first step toward creating a more balanced and fulfilling life. Taking intentional time for oneself not only fosters resilience in the face of challenges but also contributes to overall happiness and a sense of well-rounded well-being. In this journey of self-discovery, understanding the importance of stress awareness becomes a guiding light toward a healthier and more harmonious life. Check out the tips below for ways to relax and keep ahead of your own stress levels.

**Remember!** As part of MINES EAP resources, you have access to MindCo stress relief and smoking cessation programs. These offer 6-week CBT-based programs delivered through VR right in the comfort of your own home. Call or [log in](#) today for more details or to sign up and receive your headset!

To your total wellbeing,  
The MINES Team

***Relaxation Methods that Really Work***

## ***This Month's Focus***

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Everyone has stress and feels its effects. Short-term effects of stress include headaches, shallow breathing, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and upset stomach. Long-term (chronic) stress can increase your risk for heart disease, back pain, depression, constant muscle aches and pains, and a weak immune system.

Chronic stress can affect your emotions and behavior. It makes you grouchy, impatient, less enthusiastic about your job, and depressed.

To keep stress at a minimum and reduce its effects on your life, research shows it is helpful to find and practice healthy ways to manage it. Try these methods to see what works best for you.

### **Take a breath**

Start by sitting up straight. Breathe in so your rib cage expands, and then breathe out slowly. Breathing in this way relaxes muscles. This helps to reduce tension. It also reduces the likelihood of muscle and back pain.

You can focus on a word, a mantra, or even your breath by focusing on your nostrils. Feel the breath coming in and going out. What you're trying to do is put the focus on something other than your problems. Do this for 10 to 20 minutes, twice a day.

### **Relax slowly**

Sit or lie down, if you can, and close your eyes. Starting at your head, tense your face by clenching your teeth and furrowing your brow. Hold the tension for 5 seconds, then release it.

Next, tense your shoulders by bringing them up to your ears. Hold for 5 seconds, then release. Tense your arm muscles and hold for 5 seconds, then release. Continue to tighten and release each group of muscles in your body until you reach your toes. Focus on the warmth and heaviness of your body as you relax. Breathe gently for a few moments, and then open your eyes.

### **Visualize**

Sit or lie down and close your eyes. For 5 to 10 minutes, imagine you're in a place you love. This may be the beach, the mountains, or the house you grew up in. Breathe slowly and deeply as you imagine what you see, feel, hear, taste, and smell in your special place.

### **Be patient**

Be patient with yourself and with this process. It's important to find a method that works for you on an ongoing basis, not just when your life is out of control. Doing this regularly can give you a place of calm to return to when the going gets rough.

## ***Stress Awareness: Talking About Stress in Our Daily Lives***

Guest article from Emilio Goldenhersch, psychologist, researcher, Co-founder, and CEO of MindCo Health

### **Why Stress Matters:**

Stress is a universal experience transcending borders, industries, and age groups. It affects us all. We live in a world that constantly pushes our boundaries to make us feel stressed as if it would be designed for it. Luckily, most of us are and can become aware of this, and do something about it.

Due to the diverse personas and industries grappling with stress, we see consequences not just at home, but there is also a profound impact on our workforce. Let's explore some examples:

### **Personas & Stress:**

- **Construction Workers:** A physically demanding job often leads to high stress levels. The constant pressure for precision and safety can be mentally taxing. Being for long periods of time under such conditions may lead to a higher level of stress.
- **City Counties:** Rural and urban areas experience stress differently. Urban dwellers often contend with the fast-paced lifestyle, while rural areas may face isolation and economic challenges, causing stress. Access to treatment is different in terms of availability, on-site vs. online, which may increase the challenges and create more stress.
- **Younger Adults:** Millennials and Gen Z face unique stressors, from student loan debt to a rapidly changing job market, with social media and peer pressure adding to the formula like never in history before. These generations have needs that older ones never had, causing more stress.

### **Stress in the Workforce:**

Stress takes a toll on productivity and mental well-being. In the workforce, it leads to absenteeism, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. Because attrition may increase due to these consequences, hiring, and retention is highly related to stress management. It is a systemic problem, that requires a systemic solution, with complications affecting businesses and economies at large.

### **The Systemic Approach:**

- **Education:** Raising awareness about stress and mental health is crucial. Initiatives like stress management workshops can empower individuals to cope with stress.

- **Mental Health Support:** Employers can play a pivotal role by offering mental health services and promoting a supportive workplace culture.
- **CBT-Based Programs:** Combining technology, like CBT apps and Virtual Reality training, with traditional therapy provides accessible tools to manage stress effectively.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging communities to come together, share experiences, and learn stress management techniques can be a powerful remedy.

Being aware of stress encourages us to recognize the ubiquitous nature of stress and its impact on our lives. By taking a systemic approach to address it, we can build a world that's more resilient, supportive, and empathetic. Together, we can manage and mitigate stress for a healthier and happier future.

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***If you or a member of your household needs assistance or guidance on any of these wellbeing topics, please call MINES & Associates, your EAP, today for free, confidential, 24/7 assistance at 800.873.7138.***

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