Holiday Marital Stress -- How to Survive the Holidays

*Stress Proof Your Marriage During the Holidays*

<http://marriage.about.com/od/holidaysurvival/a/holidaystress.htm>

As the holidays get closer, your marriage may be dealing with more stress than it’s used to. The holidays can tear your marriage apart. Instead of enjoying one another and your families, you may find yourselves having more disagreements and feeling overwhelmed.

Early in our marriage, I remember feeling stressed as Thanksgiving drew closer and closer because I knew that the decision as to where to spend that day as well as where to spend Christmas needed to be made once again.

And as in the past, we would disagree about it. The usual compromise was to stay close to home, which meant that we spent both holidays with Bob's parents and family and my folks and grandparents would drive several hundred miles to be with us.

Thankfully, after a few years of this worry and concern over who we were hurting, including hurting ourselves, we reached a mutual decision to do whatever was best for the two of us and our children that particular year.

It was like having a huge weight lifted off our shoulders. We also started enjoying the 12 Days of Christmas, which meant for us, we could visit family and celebrate Christmas any time between December 26 and January 5th. We reserved January 6th for our own 12th Night Open House Party. Everyone we knew was invited. The holiday season became a lot less stressful for us.

Here are the danger signs that your marriage may be cracking under the holiday pressure and what you can do about it.

Disagreements about who to see and not see, who to visit and not visit, where to go, or whether to stay home can create a great deal of stress in your lives.

* There can be so many things to make decisions about.
* There can be too many extra things to do.
* Worries about finances can increase.

**Danger Signs**

Here are danger signs of too much stress and conflict in your marriage during the holidays, and suggestions about what to do about it.

* Retreating from one another.
* Being irritable with everyone and everything.
* Barking at one another over small incidents.
* More arguments with each other.
* Relationship seems fine one moment and then there you are fighting the next.
* Defensiveness.
* Being over tired.
* Sleeping too much or not enough.
* Recurring headaches or illnesses, or just feeling lousy.
* Being forgetful.
* Feeling sad or depressed.
* Not eating well.
* Drinking or smoking more than usual.

**What The Two of You Can Do**

* Eat healthy meals and drink plenty of water.
* Watch how much caffeine you consume and try to cut back on it.
* Monitor and limit alcohol consumption.
* Make sure you discuss money and how much you both are comfortable spending on gifts.
* Set a holiday budget together and stick to it.
* Talk over your expectations of the holidays with each other.
* Know your limits with what you can and can't do.
* Remind one another that it is okay to say "no".
* Keep visits to or with family reasonable and well planned.
* Realize that the holidays probably won't be perfect.
* Look at all you have accomplished and at how well things are going rather than looking at what hasn't been done.
* Do some breathing exercises to help reduce the stress you are feeling.
* Take a walk outdoors or get some other form of physical exercise each
* Schedule quiet time for yourselves, both as individuals and as a couple. Even a 15-minute time out can do wonders.