

Notes From Melba

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Melba W. Benson, Ph.D.

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'Tis the Season ...

For Surviving the Holidays

"Nobody's walking out on this fun, old fashioned family Christmas. No, no! We're all in this together.."

— Chevy Chase as Clark Wilhelm Griswold, Jr.
in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation



"As we talked about the reasons why so many people have a tendency to overindulge in food and drink during this time of year, I suggested that it may be because we're so hungry for soul-nourishing connection and conversation that we attempt to fill the void with a form of pseudo-nourishment through excess food and drink. Either that, or we simply use food and alcohol to medicate ourselves against the boredom of non-stop, superficial chit chat."

— Cheryl Richardson



"Christmas is just plain weird. What other time of year do you sit in front of a dead tree in the living room and eat candy out of your socks?"

—Maxine

Are you looking forward to the holiday season ahead? Or, do you wish you could go to sleep in mid-November and not wake up until January 2?

Many people have fantasies of what the perfect holiday season should be, and then they are hit with reality. **The more we struggle to make reality match our expectations, the more difficult our holidays will be. The faster we adjust our expectations to reality, the less pain we will feel.**

Quite often the holidays bring together people you would never let in the house if they weren't related to you, and you spend large sums on gifts for people you aren't particularly crazy about.

Ideally the holiday season should be a time for giving thanks, getting together with family and friends, and celebrating special traditions. However, for many people the season is accompanied by tremendous stress from a variety of sources.

The keys to healthy, happy holidays are maintaining your balance and keeping the stress from overwhelming you.

If you are one of those who dreads the holidays, try pinpointing the causes of your discomfort and determine what actions you need to take to relieve it.

According to experts, *the top 10 causes of holiday stress* are:

1. Social and personal expectations.
2. Too many responsibilities.
3. Trying to change or control other people.
4. Unpleasant memories.
5. Unpleasant emotions and other body reactions.
6. Blaming yourself or others when things go wrong.
7. Failing to anticipate likely problems and delays.
8. Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope with stress.
9. Expecting things to always go well.
10. Expecting others to behave as you would like.

We hope that the following articles at <http://www.melbabenson.com/articles.php> will help you survive the challenges presented by the holiday season.

"Managing Holiday Stress"

"Managing Money"

"Surviving Mall Madness"

"Office Party Etiquette"

"Holiday Challenges for Blended Families"

"Celebrating the Holidays Alone"

"Coping With Grief During the Holidays"

"Family Relationships"

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