



# Surviving Holiday Gatherings

## AURORA EAP

The holidays can be a joyous time of year shared with family and friends, but they can also bring stress and anxiety as we struggle to keep up with often-unrealistic demands and expectations.

The following tips for surviving the holidays are great for increasing your energy and reducing your stress, this season and all year long.

1. **Take time for yourself.** Although spending time with friends and family is essential, it's also important to have at least five minutes to yourself to relax. Try practicing deep breathing exercises when you feel stressed out.
2. **Say "No".** The number one rule for surviving the holidays is remembering that you can always say "No" and you can always do things more simply, even if that isn't the way it's always been done in the past. It is ok to say no and you don't even have to explain why if you don't want to.
3. **Have realistic expectations.** There is no such thing as the perfect party or the perfect decorations or the perfect way to spend the holidays. Don't set yourself up for disappointment by placing unrealistic demands on yourself or others.
4. **Reconsider spending time with family.** If the family or friends that you are spending the holidays with are going to or already are causing you more stress than you can handle, then reconsider whether spending time with them is really the best choice you could make right now. Most people are afraid to spend the holidays alone, but comparing that to being around people who invalidate you, which situation would you really prefer? Or, consider limiting the time you are available.
5. **Create new traditions.** Instead of throwing a dessert or cocktail party, try snowshoeing or ice-skating as an alternate holiday event. Play powder puff football or build a snowman. Or, try a pizza feast on Thanksgiving instead of the traditional turkey dinner.
6. **Take time to laugh.** Laughing is a great tension reliever. It burns calories, reduces stress and usually means that you're enjoying yourself.

For additional information or support call Aurora EAP at 800.236.3231