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# About.com Generalized Anxiety

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder & The Holidays

Making The Winter Holidays Less Stressful

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For many Americans, even those without generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), the winter holidays can be exceptionally stressful. People with GAD often have elevated levels of stress around this time as well, making it difficult to enjoy family gatherings, traveling, and gift giving. Hopefully, the ideas can help make these events more enjoyable than before.

### Work on Self-Soothing

One of the greatest tools that people with GAD can develop is the ability to self-soothe. Developing a set of reminders that can help you relax and calm yourself can be extremely helpful during stressful events and times. Many people learn what their most basic fears are that drive their worries (being rejected or devalued, doing something embarrassing, making someone angry), and then learn to remind themselves that they are safe and can deal with whatever happens.

### Set Up Events to be Less Stressful

One thing that makes holidays stressful is navigating endless travel and hospitality plans, and scheduling time to see people. If you are someone who worries about these types of details, then this may be a good opportunity to try and simplify. If you are able to control some of your planning, try to make things as stress-free and clean as possible. For example, avoid driving miles to see 9 friends in one day. Instead, try to arrange one large gathering. Use creativity to streamline your plans.

### Accept That There Will Be Stress

It may seem contradictory to accept the stress and also reduce it, but knowing that the holidays can be stressful and anxiety-provoking makes it less of a surprise and something you can plan for. This period of time can be difficult for everyone, and simply being ready for that element can buffer some of the fear leading up to it.

### Rely on Your Support System

Finally, let your close friends and family members know how this is going for you and see how they can be helpful. If your friends like to be accommodating, then let them help you out when you need it. Working with your mental health provider to create some plans well in advance of the holidays can also be helpful. Periods of stress are the best times to try new things and rely on the people around you to help.

Hopefully making some small adjustments, and remembering to calm yourself in the process, can make for a much more satisfying holiday experience.

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