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## Agriculture & Natural Resources

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### Help Avoid Holiday Stress

The holidays always seem to sneak up on us, producing anxiety and stress that can spill over to our families. From Thanksgiving to New Year's, it seems like non-stop whirlwind of activities. Simply, it can be a very stressful time of year.

Crowded shopping malls, massive food preparation, children cooped up in the house, holiday card writing are some stress factors. Stress increases because of unrealistic expectations, financial drains, and disappointment over impossible family reunions, and exhaustion.

Reduce your holiday stress and make the holidays more relaxed and fun for everyone. Set priorities. Don't plan to do more in a day than your time and energy allow. Ask yourself, "Do these tasks really need doing?" and "Does it really need to be done by me?"

Be realistic about demands you place on yourself. Learn to share responsibilities and don't expect everything and everyone to be perfect. Let go of the notion that you alone must make it a "perfect holiday" for everyone.

Have realistic expectations about what both you and other family members have time to do. Don't push yourself to the point where you and your family are too exhausted to enjoy the holidays and the only thing you feel when they are over is relief. Say "no" to some requests.

Allow yourself some private times. Set aside time to be alone and attentive to your self. Listen to your urges for calmness. Think about how to respond to those who will be upset if you choose a calmer, simple life.

Let go of some unrealistic expectations. Ask yourself: "What would I like my children to remember about the holidays when they are adults? What are my hopes for my children this holiday season? What are my goals for myself?"

Remind yourself that it is possible for your family to have memorable holiday experiences without spending a great deal of money. Discuss your financial situation as a family and develop a holiday budget that is based on realistic expectations of what you can afford. Stick to that budget.

Remember some people's attitudes and habits cannot be changed. Family problems do not magically go away. Don't expect to be happy all the time and don't expect all of your time with family to be characterized by harmony. There may be a few rough spots, but you can still come out of the holidays with precious family experiences.

Involve the children in holiday preparations. Don't be so busy doing for them that you do without. Have fun with them and let them participate actively.

Be realistic about the holidays. Avoid unnecessary disappointment and stress. Remember this holiday season will never come again. Make it a special and memorable one.

Source: Hansen, Gary L., "Realistic Expectations Help Avoid Holiday Stress", University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, Retrieved November 9, 2001 from <http://www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Sociology/holexpec.htm>