



Tip of the Month December 2025

Winter Holiday Stress

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Ahh, the holidays. For many of us, we arrive into late November and early December with a mix of emotions. Excitement, trepidation, hope, stress, and many other feelings might arrive all at once; some are welcome, some are uninvited *and* unwanted. If we have perfectionistic tendencies, anxiety about cooking or hosting might be the first to arrive at the table. Let's break down some common stressors and strategies we can use to address them.

Work Stress

The end of the year may bring a flurry of demands from our clients and employers that we get things done before year end. Of course, these demands arrive precisely at the time that we have multiple calendar entries that call us away from our desk. How do we manage this?

First, if you are planning to take time off over the holidays, drop a holiday notification into the footer of your emails early. That notification should state when you plan to be away and how that will affect your availability and response times. This allows your clients to schedule time with you before you leave if it is necessary and may permit you to have a disruption-free time away from work.

Second, if you've been reluctant to do so before, this is a suitable time to delegate. There are others in your office who are better able to bear the weight of extra assignments right now. Third, pause before you accept additional work. Do you have the bandwidth to get it done? Is now the time to sign on new matters? Will doing so disrupt what you really want to do over the holidays. Don't be afraid to say no.

Finally, if matters are not time-sensitive defer them to next year. So many of our deadlines are self-imposed and relate to what we think we *should* be doing and not what the matter requires. As a nod to the additional stress of the holiday, carefully prioritizing what must get done matters.

Family Stress

Oh, the expectations surrounding time with family! For some of us, the hopes of the holidays crescendo when we come together with family. We might be excited for these get togethers only to be reminded why they can sometimes be emotionally taxing. Old patterns that no longer suit us might emerge. Political divisions known, but previously unspoken, may be acknowledged aloud. This confluence of realities reminds us that the time prior to the holidays is a suitable time to shore up our boundaries.

Boundaries relate to our abilities to know and express what we need and want together with our confidence in saying “no” when appropriate. When it comes to family, it is good to recognize that when setting boundaries results in change, it may be met with resistance for any number of reasons. First, patterns of communication may be well worn grooves in the history of the family. Switching things up may be perceived as a coup of family norms or a rejection of the essence of family. Second, when it comes to family, we may feel selfish or guilty when saying no. This is an ideal time to “change the view.” Changing the view simply requires us to imagine that a friend or family member explained the situation to us exactly as we are feeling it and then asking ourselves, *if they set a boundary, would I call them selfish or wrong?* Detaching our own emotions from the situation sometimes results in some desperately needed clarity.

If you feel weak or find yourself on the verge of acquiescing to something unwanted, remember boundaries build better relationships by decreasing conflict and feelings of resentment while increasing feelings of safety. Setting boundaries also helps us be better guardians of our own well-being by putting us in touch with our own needs and learning to effectively communicate them.

Taking Care of Ourselves

We can take the edge off holiday stress by planning for our own well-being. Toward that end, sticking to a grounding routine and aligning with our own values can be meaningful ways to take care of our own needs.

Stick to a Grounding Routine

We all know the feeling of being spread too thin as our commitments seriously outpace our resources to meet them. One of the ways that we can bring ourselves moments of peace is to make space for a meaningful grounding routine. If you’ve never tried meditation, download a [free app](#) and start out small. Even a two-minute guided meditation can ground you once a day in the spaciousness of being present. In that space, there are no demands, no conflict; it’s just you and stillness. A short daily meditation can provide you with a certain time for respite and repose amidst the din of the holidays.

Maybe now is the time to spend a few minutes in gratitude. A [gratitude practice](#) is a simple, non-time-consuming way to enhance our well-being and tamp down our stress response. Over time, it also helps us notice things for which we feel grateful and has been shown to improve everything from sleep to social connection.

Align With Your Values

Amidst the din of the holidays, it's easy to lose track of what *really* matters to us. But could the holiday season look remarkably brighter if we just settled on *one thing* to focus on? Think of it like setting an intention; where do you want to use your energy? What kind of energy do you want to bring to the season?

If your focus is on *connecting* with loved ones, let that focus guide your choices to making quiet getaways and creating inviting settings. When you do so, the pressure to make the perfect meal or dazzle with your cleaning skills falls away; these are unrelated to your principal goal of connecting with loved ones. When you do connect, let yourself really experience it without preoccupation. Making a connection memory can give you a nice "place" to revisit when life gets complicated.

If *honoring traditions* is the intention that you want to carry into the holidays of 2025, focus on those practices that resonate with your heart and memory. Let go of novelty this year and set aside the need to outdo prior holiday efforts.

Aligning with our values can simplify our holidays by letting us focus our attention only on what really carries them forward.

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL) wishes you a holiday season that brings you a manageable schedule, moments of peace and happiness, and alignment with what matters to you.