

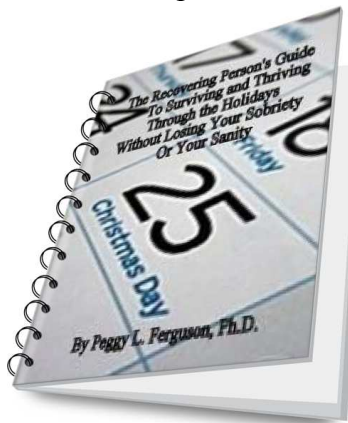
Letting Go Of Perfect One Major Tool For Managing Holiday Stress

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

One of the main reasons that many people experience so much holiday stress is that they have expectations that do not match reality and they keep trying to nudge reality to be more in line with their expectations. The Holidays do not have to be perfect to be happy, merry, or enjoyable.

When you spend your time, energy and money to try to find the perfect gift for each person, to plan and execute the perfect meal, and to host the perfect party with each guest enjoying every other guest, you will be exhausted and disappointed. Instead of spending all that time and energy shopping for the perfect outfit to wear on Christmas or to that big Christmas party, consider adding a new holiday accessory to something that you already own, love and feel comfortable in. That "perfect" Christmas card that you spent so much time and energy on last year is probably not remembered this year. The fact that you sent a Christmas card probably will be remembered. Allocate your resources of time, energy and money accordingly.

When you can let go of the compulsion to keep spending until you think you have spent enough to get someone's attention, you don't have to spend money that you don't have or can ill afford to spend. The amount you spend does not necessarily determine the quality of the gift. And if you don't spend outside your budget, you probably won't have to be paying additional credit card expenses throughout the coming year.



Perhaps you believe that you as a neighbor, co-worker, friend, son/daughter, mother/father, or community member, that you "should" participate in all activities and get together that you are invited to. This is the time of year when you may have more invitations and social expectations than at any other time. When you are stressed out, these invitations can feel like demands for your time and attention. When you believe that

even "nice" people say "no" to some invitations, and allow yourself to do so, you can reduce a lot of stress.

2012 Letting Go of Perfect: One Major Tool For Managing Holiday Stress
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The Recovering Person's Guide to Surviving and Thriving Through The Holidays Without Losing Your Sobriety or Your Sanity Ebook.

This helpful guide for managing holiday stress explains why we experience extra stress during the holidays, how stress can impact addiction recovery, and makes suggestions not only on how to survive holiday stress, but how to move from anxiety and stress into effective problem solving. It includes worksheets. **Although written with the recovering person in mind, it provides helpful information to anyone experiencing "holiday stress".**



Special holiday meals are fodder for perfectionism. Are you compelled to serve the perfect turkey with the perfect stuffing and side dishes on the perfectly appointed holiday table? How many hours and how much monetary expense goes into the perfect meal? Would it ruin the holidays to have it catered? Do you really have to bake pies and cakes?

If you are working on losing weight or maintaining weight loss, would it be self-sabotaging to think that you must provide your guests foods which you don't eat? Believing that you are baking those holiday treats for someone else could be a set up for relapse. The same thing applies for maintaining sobriety. Other people usually do not expect newly sober people to provide alcohol at their holiday social gatherings.

If you have visions of your home cleaned, polished, and decorated to perfection, the lights strung perfectly across your rooftop and your Christmas tree the picture of perfection, you may be spending every waking moment to accomplish it, and in the process, the stress just keeps getting higher and higher. If on the other hand, you take into account the amount of time, energy, and resources that are available to you, and do only what you can reasonably accomplish, you will be less stressed and happier with the results. Would Christmas be cancelled if you decided to do only as much as you can reasonably do.

There is only one cure for holiday perfectionism stress. No one is perfect--not even you. When you can accept that you are not perfect and that the holidays do not have to be perfect for you to be loved, approved of, and accepted, you can relax and enjoy them. You are worthwhile and worthy even when your turkey is dry, your gift is the wrong size, the mantle never got decorated, and everyone is not present for the holidays.

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