Wellness in 10: 10 ways to destress during the Holidays

As much as we all love the holidays, they can be very overwhelming. Between the travel, the crowds, the shopping, the budgets, and the family members we’re glad to only see once per year, there’s a lot going on even for the most well balanced among us. That’s why this month Wellness in 10 is dedicated to ways to destress during the holidays.

1. **Start Monotasking**

Some of us are built for multitasking, and can handle whatever life throws at us (most of the time). With the added tasks that go along with the holidays, however, it can build up to too much. For the month of December, decide to become a “monotasker,” making a list of everything that must be accomplished, and following each thing through to completion before starting the next thing. The focus this allows will let you be more effective at each task, and will make you feel more accomplished at the end of the day.

2. **Practice Gratitude**

Setting some time aside during the holidays to appreciate what we have is one of the special reasons we love this time of year, but many of us get too bogged down to remember to enjoy them. Plan time into your day to appreciate the time we’re able to spend with loved ones, and feel the holiday stress melt off.

3. **Don’t give away every minute**

Just because we’ll be spending time with people this holiday season doesn’t mean we have to spend ALL our time with people this holiday season. It’s ok to take a break from all the hustle and bustle to let yourself recenter and calm down. A short walk or some time with a book may be all it takes.

4. **Take a break from caffeine**

Caffeine has a tendency to make us jittery and can prevent us from getting enough sleep. It’s also hiding in a lot of the holiday treats that we forget about (it’s in chocolate, remember). Find a nice herbal tea and make that your drink of choice for the month of December to keep yourself from being on-edge.
5. **Sneak in some exercise**

Exercise doesn’t always seem possible when the days are packed, but it’s been proven time and again to relieve stress. Schedule in some short exercise sessions, like walks on your work breaks, to let off some steam.

6. **Take in some sun**

Giving you a boost of serotonin, a little sunshine will do you a lot of good during this time of year. We’re often stuck inside with work and family commitments, but get outside a little bit to feel better. If you can’t go outside, at least position yourself near a window in the sunlight for a few quick rays.

7. **Just say “No”**

There are a million things you could do during this time of year, but it turns out that there isn’t always a lot you have to do. Take some time once in a while to do a self-assessment, and if you’re feeling overwhelmed, it’s ok to take some things off your agenda. “I don’t feel up to it” is a completely legitimate reason to bow out.

8. **Get hot (and spicy)**

Spicy foods trigger endorphins, so take a break from the holiday treats in favor of some fajitas, salsa, or a steaming bowl of chili. You’ll avoid the onslaught of goodies, and your body will still get the positive feelings.

9. **Take a hands-on approach to stress relief**

One study has shown that the health benefits of giving a massage outweigh the benefits of receiving a massage. For the short time you’re giving a massage to your partner, the holiday worries will be on the back-burner. Trade off with your partner, and you’ll get the best of both worlds.

10. **‘Tis better to give than to receive**

Being generous has been proven to lower stress, so lend a hand in whichever way seems most appropriate. Your own worries will take a back seat to the task at hand, and someone else will be grateful for the help. You might offer to watch the neighbor’s kids while he or she goes shopping, shovel the sidewalk on your block, or make a donation to your favorite charity or nonprofit organization (like NWI).

Most of all, have a fun, safe, and relaxing holiday season – from your friends at the National Wellness Institute.