

## Stress Management Techniques for the Holiday Season

Stress is common during the holiday season, even in Hallmark movies! Fortunately, there are techniques you can use to help keep stress at bay.

For example, a strategy that many life coaches recommend is to *prioritize and reschedule*. That simply means prioritizing what's truly important this month — perhaps an upcoming get-together with family — and focusing your energies on that. Then, schedule other lower-priority tasks for later in the month or even into January. This will reduce the stress of trying to do everything at once.

Another technique is to delegate. Who says you have to do it all yourself? Ask other family members to chip in if you have preparations in and around the home. When delegating, assign tasks based on an individual's strengths. For example, give organizing related tasks to the family member who is best at organizing.

Finally, consider creating or identifying a "quiet space" so you have somewhere to retreat to when things get hectic. This can be somewhere in the home, such as a favourite reading nook, or a place away from home, like a local coffee shop. Even a walk



around the block can serve as a well-needed respite.

While December can bring about a flurry of tasks, managing stress is about reclaiming the joy and warmth the holiday season is meant to represent. These techniques will help ensure that happens.



## Home Security Tips that Won't Cost you a Fortune

When most people think about home security, they tend to focus on locks, alarms, and cameras. While these safeguards are essential, there are many other things you can do to prevent break-ins — without having to invest a lot of money.

For example, start by reviewing your landscaping. Well maintained landscaping can be a powerful deterrent to burglars. Overgrown trees and bushes provide perfect hiding spots for potential intruders. So, keep shrubs trimmed and ensure tree branches don't offer easy access to upper-level windows.

Lighting is also important. A well-lit exterior can make your home an unattractive target for burglars. That doesn't mean you need to illuminate your home like a Christmas tree 24/7! Instead, consider motion-activated lighting. It not only conserves energy but can startle and deter anyone trying to sneak around your property.

There is another simple piece of advice most homeowners know but sometimes forget. If you're away on vacation, don't let your property scream "No one's home!" Hold your mail and newspaper deliveries. Ask a neighbour to pick up flyers dropped at your front door. And, don't advertise your absence on social media by posting holiday pictures while you're away!

The bottom line: Don't rely entirely on gadgets and systems. Take a more comprehensive approach to home security and you'll have more peace of mind when you're away.

## Scientists' Recommendations for Staying Motivated in 2024

Sometimes, the goals we set for a new year are just dreams. But, if you're serious about achieving your goals and plans in this new year, you'll need to find a way to stay motivated in your pursuit of them. So, what can you do? Start by creating some momentum. Take the first steps. Then, learn from the science of motivation. Here are some research-backed techniques for staying the course.

- 1. Break it Down:** According to the *Zeigarnik Effect*, our brains have an easier time processing tasks when they're broken down into smaller steps. So, if you're planning a home renovation, don't just jot down "renovate kitchen." Break it into actionable items like "choose countertop material" or "pick paint colour for cabinets."
- 2. Visualize the End Result:** Studies have shown that regularly visualizing the successful completion of a goal can bolster motivation. Picture your renovated living room or that garden you've been dreaming about. Imagine the compliments from guests and the satisfaction you'll feel.
- 3. Accountability Partners:** A study from the *American Society of Training and Development* found that people are 65% more likely to complete a goal if they commit to it with another person. So, tell someone!
- 4. Celebrate Small Wins:** Dopamine, often referred to as the "feel-good" neurotransmitter, plays a significant role in motivation. When you achieve a milestone, no matter how small, your brain releases dopamine. Celebrating these small



- victories not only feels good but also propels you to keep going.
- 5. Stay Educated:** According to the *Expectancy Theory*, the belief that your efforts will result in success can boost motivation. Read books, attend workshops, or consult experts related to your goal. The more knowledgeable you are, the more confident you'll become in your path to success.

Good luck with your 2024 goals and plans!