

STRESS MANAGEMENT POST-HOLIDAY TIPS

FRST CENTER

The holidays aren't all sunshine and daisies – long shifts and disrupted routines on top of seeing family for the first time in years, timing pressures, buying gifts, travel, and food – can add another layer of stress to an already demanding job. Below are some practical strategies to manage post-holiday stress:

1. Get back to basics and balance:

- Using short naps or resources like black out curtains can help with getting back to your normal sleep schedule.
- Add snacks to the menu – high protein, quick snacks can help you balance the holiday leftovers!
- Consider a stretch or a walk throughout the day. Movement (of any kind) is proven to help with stress – movement tricks the brain into thinking the stressful moments are over and can help your body calm the stress response.

2. Schedule time to decompress

- Ask yourself – What do you like to do on your time off?
- Just because you engaged in holiday festivities, doesn't mean you were able to relax. Build in intentional time between shifts to get the weight of the holidays off your chest.
- Quiet time or time to do activities you enjoy will help keep you feeling calm as you return for duty and leisure has been shown to buffer stress.
- Small things like keeping a journal or practicing gratitude (reminding yourself what you are grateful for) has been shown to help people decompress.

3. Leverage your social connections

- Humans are wired for connection – even introverts need it! First responders rely on each other – this connection matters both on and off shift.
- Social connection and feeling supported can buffer stress (when it's not the thing causing it)!
- Consider reaching out to a friend when you find time to decompress has been related to less feelings of loneliness.
- Or reach out to a coworker and commiserate about calls on shift – we bet that they'd probably like to talk about it too – and it can help you feel understood and remind you that you aren't carrying it alone.

4. Be patient

- After the holidays, it's normal to feel off for a while. It takes time to get back to basics and balance.
- Remind yourself that re-adjusting after the holidays takes time – especially in high-stress, high-responsibility roles.

Additional Resources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/living-with/index.html#:~:text=Feelings%20of%20fear%2C%20anger%2C%20sadness,and%20how%20you%20are%20feeling>
- <https://med.stanford.edu/news/insights/2025/12/stress-management-coping-skills-and-tools.html>
- <https://www.nami.org/anxiety-disorders/the-happiest-time-of-the-year-tips-for-managing-holiday-stress/>
- <https://firstrespondersfoundation.org/caring-for-yourself-during-the-holidays-a-guide-for-first-responders/>

Remember:

Taking care of yourself isn't selfish – to help others, we must first help ourselves. Taking some or all these steps add up.