

With the holidays often come a bundle of stress triggers that can take away from the festivity of the season. Being with family and friends is great, but sometimes extra tasks and pressures create situations that are less than fun and definitely not festive. Long-term family patterns may show up replete with buttons often pushed at the dinner table after too many glasses of bubbly. If you operate a business which provides holiday products, stress can reach even more elevated levels. Whatever form it takes, the strain and tension of being overloaded may rise up and ruin the holiday.

How can we deal with stress and put the joy back into the season? Try these seven steps based on the chakra system beginning with the crown or seventh chakra and going down to the root or first chakra. They can uplift our spirits and help us avoid emotional reactions when we could be having fun. We hope they resonate with you!



Set Intention (Crown). Decide in advance how you want your holiday experience to be. Use ideas like – peaceful, meaningful, relaxing, fun. Whatever words you come up with, form a simple mantra or affirmation to keep in your awareness.

Remember the three aspects of affirmations: positive, present tense, repetition. An example is ‘I am peaceful and relaxed’ or say whatever you want to remind yourself of when a situation becomes tense. Repeat often.



Visualize (Third Eye, Mind). Use mental images to picture how you would like to see the holidays unfold. You can imagine your home beautifully decorated with family members happily enjoying home-cooked meals and conversing in pleasant tones. Don't forget to picture yourself attending to tasks with relaxed ease. You may focus on the deeper meaning of the holiday and especially the fellowship of gathering together with family and friends.



Communicate (Throat). Talk to family members and friends and make plans so everyone is on the same page. Get input and add your own ideas. Share the tasks and planning so it isn't all on one person's shoulders. If past holidays were overwhelming, try simplifying. Consider a potluck instead of one person doing all the cooking. You might want to add the element of giving back to those less fortunate which will make your holidays more meaningful.



Collaborate (Heart). Invite family and friends to participate in your festivities. Work and play together and enjoy each other's company. Remember the love that brought you together in the first place and be careful not to let stress or emotions trigger unnecessary reactions. Express gratitude in random ways and you will find it returned to you. Minimize gossip and politics. It's often best to avoid conversations that cause conflict. Remember unconditional love.



Take Action (Solar Plexus). If you are hosting a gathering, let yourself enjoy the activities and tasks involved. Enlist close friends or family members to help with preparation and logistics. If you are attending other people's events, help in the kitchen and contribute to the workload. Play holiday music to lift your spirit. Take time for yoga or stretching to release pent-up energy so you have the vitality needed to carry out your tasks.



Enjoy and Play (Sacral). Remember the reason for the season and even in the midst of all you are doing, be sure to let yourself feel passion and joy for the blessings in your life. Many people have much less in life and still manage to keep smiling. In fact, a good laugh is always in order, even when mishaps occur. Especially turn your enthusiasm toward your elders or those suffering or in need. It's a perfect time to reach out to others who can use a physical or spiritual boost.



Grounding (Root). This level is where you take care of the basics, the details, and all that is necessary to manifest what you want. It's also where you can connect with the Earth and honor all it provides for your physical needs. Be specific and check off the tasks on your list so you feel you have accomplished what needs to be done. You may want to ground out by walking in nature or sitting quietly. Remember inner peace is always available even in the midst of chaos.

■ **DUDLEY AND HER HUSBAND DEAN EVENSON** are award-winning, sound healing pioneers. They have written their first book *Quieting the Monkey Mind: How to Meditate with Music*. Learn more about their work at www.soundings.com