

# Holiday Hints

## The Holidays and ADHD—A Survival Guide

(NAPSA)—Buy presents. Check. Prepare the big family meal. Check. Keep the kids occupied during winter break. Check.

In a perfect world, planning for the holidays would be that easy. The reality is holidays, while generally delightful, can require juggling family and friends, lots of lists and unsuspected surprises along the way.

For the nearly 9 million adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), holiday time creates the perfect storm. It's a never-ending cycle of to-do lists, juggling acts that falter and expectations that fall short.

"The holidays can be so stressful," said 36-year-old Laura Willingham. "The kids have all sorts of plans and we have parties to attend. I've struggled to manage it all and find time to enjoy the holidays."

For years Willingham suffered from ADHD without knowing it, while at the same time balancing her life and career without any tools to do it.

"That's common for adults with ADHD," said Dr. Edward Hallowell, a psychiatrist, ADHD expert and author of several best-selling books including "Delivered from Distraction." "The holidays often compound problems for typical Americans, but they are overwhelming for adults with ADHD."

He offers these tips to help ease the holiday headache for adults with ADHD:

- Shop smart and shop early.
- Make a list of people you need



**A few simple tips can help ease holiday stress, especially for those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.**

to buy for and don't buy too many gifts for each person.

- Create a schedule of events and don't overschedule.
- Get enough rest.
- Carve out time to exercise or have some quiet time to yourself.

Willingham said she sought help six years ago after realizing the day-to-day roller coaster she was riding might be more than stress.

"The ADHD diagnosis validated the fact that my feelings were real," she said.

According to a nationwide survey by Harris Interactive for McNeil Pediatrics™, Division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc, of more than 1,000 adults with ADHD, 46 percent of respondents reported being relieved once they were finally diagnosed.

"The silent burden adults with ADHD have is awful. Imagine always having this feeling of unexplained underachievement

because you didn't know your struggle to focus, stay organized or sit still was actually something that could be treated," Hallowell said. "The good news is that there is a diagnosis, and there are effective ways to manage ADHD."

According to the survey, 90 percent of respondents reported using visual reminders like post-it notes to manage their symptoms, 78 percent said taking prescription medication is effective and 81 percent said they use a planner. Other management techniques include listening to music and exercising.

"Above all, get into a positive frame of mind for the holidays," Hallowell said. "Your goal this year ought to be to have fun, not slug it out and get everything done. If you have fun, the people you're with will have fun, and it won't matter if every ornament is on the tree, every pie is baked and every present is beautifully wrapped. The holidays themselves ought to be the true present, and the love they represent."

"While the holidays can be particularly stressful, I now have the tools I need to manage my condition," Willingham said. "I take a daily medication, which helps me focus so that I can organize and stay on top of things. The bottom line is I don't want ADHD to get the best of me."

For additional insights from Laura Willingham and other mothers of children with ADHD, visit [www.facebook.com/adhd\\_moms](http://www.facebook.com/adhd_moms), or visit [www.mcneilpediatrics.net](http://www.mcneilpediatrics.net) for more information about ADHD in adults.