



# Surviving the Holidays

by Michelle Kelley

The famous “Rosie the Riveter” poster from the World War II era celebrated women’s entry into the labor force and their contributions to the American war effort.

Today, more than ever, “Women Can Do It” ... and 10 more things all at the same time! But should we be doing it all?

It’s a good question to ask as we gear up for the holiday season. According to an American Psychological study, half of all women in the United States experience heightened stress during the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas. That’s because women usually assume the primary responsibility in their families for meal preparation, home decorating, gift buying and ensuring that everything looks beautiful and goes smoothly. Ironically, Superwoman’s good intentions often backfire, when she eventually succumbs to exhaustion and burnout and takes it out on the family members she loves and is so valiantly striving to serve.

How can today’s “empowered woman” enjoy the holidays and family time without succumbing to exhaustion and burnout? Here are five ways you can take care of yourself to better enjoy this holiday season:

### **Practice Saying “No.”**

Remember, “no” is a complete sentence. You don’t have to explain, qualify or apologize for saying “no”. You have the right to say “no” to doing too much. In fact, learning to say “no” is essential to protect your sanity, your health, and preserve quality time with the people most important to you -- your family. You don’t need to apologize or feel guilty about taking care of yourself.

### **Rethink Gift-Giving.**

Find ways to make gift buying and gift giving easier on yourself. Shop local or online. Instead of exchanging gifts, spend quality time together. Make a spending budget and stay within your limit. Excess spending will absolutely increase your stress level.

### **Exercise.**

Taking care of your physical health/well-being is a gift you give to yourself and others, especially your children who are watching you closely during this time.

### **Schedule Down Time.**

Overbooking yourself or your family is a good way to ensure you will be too busy or tired to care about anything.

### **Sleep.**

Sleep strengthens your immune system and helps to build emotional resiliency.

Michelle Kelley, LCSW is a licensed counselor and the owner of Girls Stand Strong. As an educator, public speaker and counselor she is working towards changing the culture of what’s acceptable in relationships. Together with her family, dogs and career she understands the demands that face today’s empowered woman. For more information go to her website at [www.GirlsStandStrong.com](http://www.GirlsStandStrong.com).

