

Expert offers tips on managing anxiety during crowded holiday shopping

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With the holiday season in full swing, many people have already started their shopping. However, for some people who suffer from anxiety, crowds can make holiday shopping daunting. One Baylor College of Medicine expert offers his tips on how people can manage their anxiety so that they can shop til they drop.

"I would suggest that people who get anxiety being in [crowds](#) have a plan," said Dr. John Oldham, professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor. "What I mean by that is, if you've got a person in your family for whom you want to pick up a specific gift, figure out where the store would be that you would most likely find it, go there, and get your business done and go back home. Don't just get lost in the maze of the mall."

While Oldham did say that online [shopping](#) is a good way for those with anxiety to avoid having to deal with crowds, he also recommends people with anxiety think about other shopping alternatives.

"If you want to go shopping but being in crowds stresses you out, you might prefer an outside mall instead of a crowded indoor mall. This allows you to walk around and not be closed in with the crowds, and you don't have to do your shopping on your computer at home," Oldham said.

Oldham also suggests taking a person you feel comfortable around with you while you shop. This way, if you start feeling anxious you are with

someone who will be there to help you.

Strategies learned from [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) also can be very helpful for those with [anxiety disorders](#), he said.

"One strategy you can try is to practice and memorize a set of reminders to help yourself calm down when you feel panicked. Another strategy that might work is for you to bring a book with you so that if you need to take a break you can sit down and read until you calm down," Oldham said. "Calming strategies will depend on what you find to be distracting, and they take some practice. However, if you can become comfortable enough with trying to do these strategies, they can really help you deescalate your anxiety and you become your own internal therapist."

Oldham added that for some [people](#), crowds do not cause [anxiety](#) but instead cause irritation.

"One tip that you can do if you are getting irritated is to try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. For example, it may help lessen your irritation about standing in a long line if you imagine how the person at the register feels because he or she is probably getting yelled at by everybody in the line when they finally get up there," Oldham said.

Lastly, Oldham emphasized that it is important to always respect others even if you are in an irritating situation.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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