

ALL STRESSED OUT AT CHRISTMAS

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Overview

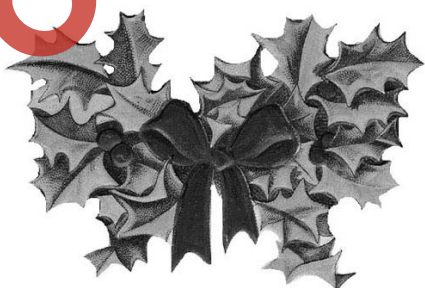
OVERVIEW

All Stressed Out At Christmas is a humorous and entertaining play that provides opportunity for every student in the school to participate. Each class contributes to the plot, making the story into a variety show that includes even the audience. Comedy, dance, singing, choral speaking, and the Nativity Scene contribute to the enjoyment of the program. Approximately midway through the production, the audience gets to stretch their legs when they are asked to stand and join in the singing as part of Santa's therapy, eliminating the need for an intermission. In the final scene, one element from each class's performance returns to the stage with Santa.

The play requires only one stage setting, and the curtain closes and re-opens only once during the production, very close to the end. A minimum number of props stay on the stage.

There is a great deal of flexibility within the play for teachers to "do their own thing". Many teachers prefer that freedom, rather than sticking to a predetermined script. The storyline is approximately 25 minutes in length, but the total time will depend on the length of the performance chosen by each teacher. The teacher has the opportunity to create his/her class's contribution within the parameters of the plot, this enabling the show to be part of the classroom curriculum if desired. It also enables the teacher to capitalize on the special abilities and talents of the children – and the teacher! – in the class. Extra scenes can be added if you wish to include more classes, and any one scene could be eliminated if there are not enough classes. As well, a class may be assigned more than one part, since the number of students participating in any given component is established by the teacher.

Students can also create posters for advertising and programs for the performance, linking the production to many requirements of the school curriculum.



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The Story

THE STORY

Christmas Eve is just over a week away, and it seems that the North Pole Workshop will not be ready on time for the Christmas trip. Santa Claus, the Elves, and the Reindeer are very stressed, and arguing over the pettiest things. Production in the Workshop has come to a virtual standstill because of the fighting and bickering among the Elves. Flight training for the Reindeer has been suspended due to problems with teamwork. Even the services of a Stress-Management Consultant fail to solve the problem! Only Mrs. Claus seems to have things under control.

Then the Elves and Reindeer come to realize that they must stop fighting among themselves and help Santa relax so he will be able to carry out his Christmas obligations. Working against two rascally Elves who try to derail their plans, Rudolph and Borman, the Foreman Elf, try various relaxation techniques to distress Santa. Even the true Christmas story plays its part in the therapy. In the end, maybe they have succeeded too well!



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Components

There are parts for up to 9 classes. Remember that parents like to see the smallest children in cute costumes, so the Nativity Scene is probably best given to the youngest class. Because the individual class performances are the choice of the teacher, any class can take any part and make it fit their level of expertise. The part of the main characters should probably be taken by older students who can project their voices well. It is advisable that the teacher whose class is doing the acting for the main characters also should be the producer/director of the show.

Suggested Grade Level

#1 All Stressed Out.....	7 – 8
#2 Aerobic Dancers	1 – 3
#3 Sports Enthusiasts	4 – 6
#4 Dancers.....	2 – 4
#5 Chocoholics	4 – 6
#6 Singers.....	4 – 8
#7 Variety Show.....	6 – 8
#8 Bathtub Relaxers/Masseurs/Masseuses.....	2 – 3
#9 Nativity Scene.....	1 – 2



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MAIN CHARACTERS

There are several characters who are involved in the main storyline, and who appear throughout. They are:

Santa	Rudolph	Borman	Foreman Elf
Mrs. Claus	Dexter	Backstrom	Consultant
	Various other Reindeer and Elves		

Suggestions: This is most suitable for an older group of students who can take the responsibility of sound and lighting effects, memorizing lines, speaking loudly and clearly, and helping the younger children as necessary. Have an understudy for each part!

The teacher of this class should be the producer/director of the whole performance. One or two students could be appointed to make sure the necessary items are put into the bathtub after each class performs.

COSTUMES AND PROPS

- costumes for Santa, Mrs. Claus, Reindeer and Elves
- business suit for Stress-Management Consultant (briefcase)
- Santa's easy chair
- Mrs. Claus's rocking chair, knitting
- portable screen
- stethoscope
- pad and pencil for Borman
- blood pressure cuff
- large wristwatch
- bathtub

- in the bathtub: soap bubbles, towel, extra pants and jacket for Santa, dumbbells, box of chocolates, caroler's scarf, shower cap

- 8 signs for the countdown to Christmas



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PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

The various other Elves and Reindeer can take the parts of the lighting, sound, stage, and curtain hands. If they are in costume, it will not matter if at any time they are seen by the audience. Two of them could also hand out the programs and song sheets to the audience as they arrive.

PRODUCTION NOTES

There are two chairs situated on the right side of the stage, one for Santa Claus (closest to the front), and one for Mrs. Claus. Santa's chair stays there throughout the play, but Mrs. Claus's can be discreetly removed at any time after her appearance on stage to speak to the Reindeer and Elves about their having chased away the Stress-Management Consultant. She does not need it when she reappears after Class #4.

All of the action takes place in the interior of Santa's home, so one set of scenery across the back of the stage is all that is required. (If desired, a night scene can be used as though it were viewed through a window.) This leaves a maximum amount of space on the stage for larger classes of students. Each class will bring its own props onto the stage and take them away when they leave, so only large items such as the stretcher, bathtub, and portable screen need be hidden behind the curtains.

The action is set out for only one exit (to the left), but if your stage has one on each side, the classes could alternate sides for more convenient entrances and exits. If there are stairs at the front of the stage, any class could come up from the auditorium floor, if so desired. With Santa staying close to the front of the stage, all the speaking parts will take place as close to the audience as possible, so it will be easier to hear. Speakers must be taught to speak loudly and clearly unless you have access to microphones. Each class can practice individually, and then a dress rehearsal will pull it all together.

Suggestion: Have Santa, Rudolph, and Borman practice at least once with each class before the dress rehearsal, so the students with speaking parts know who they are speaking to.

The bathtub is made of a box large enough for Santa to sit in, with a large, tub-shaped cardboard cut-out glued to the side that the audience will see. The props that Santa needs for each of the two bathtub scenes (first scene – towel, extra Santa suit, soap bubbles, running water recording; final scene – box of chocolates, sports equipment, dumbbells, shower cap, etc.) can be put into it so that they are readily available for his use. The first scene props can be removed after they are used, when Rudolph and Borman pull the tub to the side of the stage. In this way they will not be in the way during the final scene.

The house lights should be dimmed throughout except when the audience participates in the singing, and for the finale, when the curtains are closed while Rudolph and Borman speak to the audience. The flashing lights on the stage indicate the passage of time, and can be used to hide any prop changes, such as the removal of the bathtub and screen.

As members of the audience arrive for the performance, they will receive their song sheets for their part in the play. Instructions for their part in the play can be written on the sheets. If the children who lead the singing do some practicing at home, the audience will be better prepared for their part.

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Component 1 – All Stressed Out

CHARACTERS:

Santa	Dancer
Rudolph	Cupid
Donder	Borman
Pixie	Snoozy
Twinkie	Mrs. Claus
Consultant	Dexter
Backstrom	

(The nine reindeer sit on the floor on the left side of the stage, and several Elves on the other. Mrs. Claus is sitting in a rocking chair on the far right side of the stage, knitting. Santa comes in, irritated, at wit's end, sits down beside her in his easy chair, then jumps up and paces back and forth.)

Santa: "I don't know what's going on around here. We'll never be ready for Christmas! The Reindeer and Elves are all so stressed out! I was down at the flight training center a while ago and the Reindeer were acting terrible, just terrible – fighting, arguing. Then I went to the workshop and the Elves were doing the same! Putting each other down! Saying nasty things! Especially those two, Dexter and Backstrom. I swear, sometimes they're naughty Elves!"

(Reindeer begin arguing.)

Dancer: "Rudolph, you couldn't fly straight if you had a clothesline to follow!"

(Others shout agreement.)

Rudolph: "Well, if you could fly faster, I wouldn't always get pulled over to one side!"

(Others shout agreement.)

Cupid: "And Donder, if you weren't so clumsy, we wouldn't have crashed into that chimney!"

(Others shout agreement.)

Donder: "Well, if I didn't have to carry you, I wouldn't fly so low!"

(A free-for-all breaks out among the Reindeer, and Santa goes over and stamps his foot. He shouts loudly.)

Santa: "Stop! Stop your fighting! It's only nine days till Christmas, and you've got to learn to fly as a team! You've got to get along!"

(Reindeer leave the stage to the left, still arguing among themselves. The Elves then begin arguing. Borman, the Foreman Elf begins.)

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Component 2 – Aerobic Dancers

CHARACTERS:

Borman	Rudolph
Class #1	Student #1
Student #2	Santa

Suggestions: Have a primary class take this part, because the audience will not expect to see small children dressed in workout clothes and using dumbbells. This adds to the humor and the entertainment.

Use a fast-paced song such as *Jingle Bells* or *The Twelve Days of Christmas* for your music. Plan it to last at least 3 minutes. Divide your class into groups, so they perform in turns. Include a wide variety of moves in the aerobic routine. At the end, the students form a "U" around Santa and peer down at him and shake their heads sadly as he lies on the floor. Add some lines such as "Poor Santa! You're really out of shape!", etc. before they leave. Make as great a contrast as possible between the students' vitality and Santa's lack of it.

COSTUMES AND PROPS:

- jogging pants, sweatbands, warm-up suits, leotards, sneakers, wristbands
- dumbbells made from toilet tissue rolls and construction paper
- a set of real dumbbells for Santa
- skipping ropes
- music (tape or CD player)



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Component 5 – Chocoholics

(Santa sits down to devour the cake, with obvious enjoyment. Dexter and Backstrom disappear, to the left. Class #4 performs, then leaves. Santa tastes each goodie. Mrs. Claus enters from the right.)

Mrs. Claus: *(She is indignant when she sees what is happening.)*
"What's going on here? Where did this come from?"

Mrs. Claus: *(She grabs the cart and wheels it away.)*
"All the caffeine in this chocolate is going to send your blood pressure sky-high! If you pig out like this any more, your suit will be too small! You won't fit in the sleigh! We'll need three more reindeer to pull you, and where would we get them at this late date? I'll bet it was that Dexter and Backstrom behind this. They are the naughtiest elves! They'll get straw in their stockings for sure, this Christmas!"

(Mrs. Claus leaves, to the left, pushing the cart.)

Santa: *(Santa grins sheepishly.)*
"Well, it was good while it lasted."

(Santa returns to his chair. LIGHTS FLASH OFF AND BACK ON. A Reindeer walks across the stage carrying a sign, "4 DAYS LEFT". Borman and Rudolph come in again with the inevitable stethoscope and blood pressure cuff.)

Borman: "Santa, we heard about your "pig-out" yesterday. Shame on you! Just for that, you're going to have to really get into this next activity. We've got some people coming to help you sing."

Santa: "Well, finally you've found something that I like to do, that's also good for me. Living to be this age, I must be doing something right."

