Holiday Happiness: Don't Let the Humbugs Bite

# Celebrating the Healthy Way

As the holiday season approaches, many people anticipate times of happiness, good cheer, and excitement shared with friends and family. However, holidays can also bring feelings of anxiety, stress, sadness, and disappointment. These tips may help improve your mood and reduce feelings of stress.

- **Eat and drink in moderation.** It's easy to find yourself eating more then you normally would because of the abundance of food. Try to keep your portions small, and avoid the richest foods. Watch how much alcohol you use, as excessive alcohol use can increase feelings of depression.
- **Have and stick to a budget.** Overspending can sneak up on you during the holidays. Decide in advance what you can comfortably afford to spend on gifts, entertaining, decorations, and travel. Make choices within the reality of this budget to avoid the stress that often comes with post-holiday debt.
- **Connect with others.** If you're alone for the holidays, find ways to engage. Try inviting others to get together, call a friend, or take a volunteer shift for a cause that matters to you. This helps you connect with people and get the benefits of lending a hand.
- **Make time for regular exercise.** If you already exercise, try to keep your regular schedule despite the busyness of the season. If you don't exercise, try incorporating some light activity into your daily routine. Even a short walk with a friend can help reduce stress and boost your mood.
- **Don't expect a perfect holiday.** Unrealistic expectations can add to stress levels. Accept that you can't control every variable. Negotiate new approaches to yearly stressors, then try to shift your energy into enjoying the days as they unfold.
- **Take a good look at your holiday traditions.** Are there any traditions or activities that can be modified? Complicated meals and elaborate gift giving can raise your stress and anxiety levels. Consider simplifying your meals and celebrations.
- **Remember lost loved ones through positive memories.** We can miss those who are gone even more during holiday festivities. Talking and sharing good memories of them and the times you shared can be comforting and keep the memories alive.
- **Find time to relax.** Re-energize by getting away from the pressures of the holidays, even if only for a short break. You might have a quiet cup of tea or take a nap, a hot bath, or a refreshing walk. What helps you recharge and feel calmer?
- **Plan ahead.** Not waiting until the last minute to finish holiday preparations can save you time, money and stress. Also, try making some fun plans for after the holidays to reduce the effects of a possible post-holiday letdown.

**If you're feeling down or stressed,** give some of these self-help strategies a try. However, if you feel down for more than a few weeks, or if you're experiencing changes in sleeping or eating patterns, talk to your health care provider.

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