Healthy Holiday Tips
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As a young girl my favorite tradition was to pull out my sleeping bag to spend the night under our newly decorated tree. The twinkling lights and decorations brought on so many wonderful feelings. As an adult, I’ve learned to kindle some of the old feelings by being intentional. Here are some ways to plan with intent to manage the stress and demands of the holidays.

Prioritize your plans. Write a list of the most important things you would like to do this holiday season. Feel free to choose others to help plan. Remember to schedule in plenty of downtime and activities that don't cost money. Don't forget to plan something special for yourself such as time for a favorite hobby, a relaxing date, a massage, or a favorite movie. Post a calendar everyone can see in a prominent place in your home. Leave time for last minute things you decide to do. Less is more!

Get your "Not to Do List" ready. Make a list of things to avoid; especially things that create undue stress. Give yourself permission not to do everything! If you are unable to avoid something, try doing it differently.

Be reasonable about expectations. Avoid aiming for the perfect holiday. Life isn’t perfect so the holidays won’t be either. Surf the ups and downs with an attitude of acceptance and forgiveness. Be careful of inappropriate guilt, the inner voice which says things like “I should” or “I shouldn’t” that usually stem from others’ expectations or societal pressures.

Be faithful to your traditions. Traditions are important for us individually, culturally and spiritually creating a sense of togetherness. Some traditions may seem outdated or stressful. Let go of traditions that no longer seem relevant while savoring others. Set boundaries if necessary or start a new tradition of your own.

Set a budget and stick to it. Take stock of what is most important to you and your family being mindful of how you spend holiday money. A small index card in your wallet or purse tracking holiday spending or an envelope of cash which once spent is gone, helps you stay within budget. Aim to focus more on experiences than gifts.

Practice mindfulness and self-care. When you find yourself enjoying the present moment, you are experiencing mindfulness. Utilize the 4 senses exercise anywhere, anymore. Notice what you see, hear, smell and feel with your senses. Holidays are rich with moments leading to positive feelings and relaxation if we choose to notice them. Remember the gift of self-care. You can also explore the many available tools to help with self-care such as online meditations. Sleep well, eat healthy, exercise, and plan for at least 15 minutes of relaxation daily. Jump start your New Year's resolutions now!

It is okay to have both positive and negative emotions. For some people, the holidays are associated with the loss of loved ones, family conflict, or not having everything. Accept any feelings of sadness or grief with self-compassion. Express your feelings or seeking help when you need it is a sign of strength and dedication to being your best self. If you do not need support, be mindful of those around you that may need encouragement or a listening ear. Look for others in need. Volunteer where you feel useful.

All the best as you begin to plan your holidays.

Life and Work Connections wants to wish you and yours a most joyous and peaceful holiday season.