



Lady of America Newsletter - December 2009 - 'Tis the Season

Wellness: Keeping Healthy During the Holiday Stress

'Tis the season to be jolly and stressed! It's autopilot time as we get ready for the holidays. There's gift shopping, parties, holiday feasts and family visits, all triggers for feeling overwhelmed and stressed out. Add to that lack of sleep and exercise, increased alcohol consumption, and time constraints and money issues, and you have a recipe for unhealthy behaviors. Thankfully, there are ways of keeping healthy during the holidays and methods of coping with holiday stress.



"The effectiveness with which people manage stress — especially women during the holidays, given their increased stress levels — is critical to long-term mind and body health," Russ Newman, Ph.D., J.D., executive director for professional practice, American Psychological Association (APA) was quoted in a report by the APA. "It seems that women, in particular, view holiday stress and their ways of coping with this holiday stress as a normal part of the season." Newman was referring to a national survey on stress conducted by the APA in 2006.

"Research shows that stress, and the unhealthy behaviors people use to manage it, contribute to some of our country's biggest health problems such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. So it's imperative that people take steps to address issues like holiday stress in healthier ways," Newman continued.

Christine Laureano, a personal development and life transformation coach and a host of www.blogtalkradio.com, agrees. "Stress can be intense at times and not so at other times. We feel we have so much to do in a short period of time, trying to control the things that are really out of our control. We choose how we want to react to stresses in our lives," she said on her radio show.

To help cope with the stress of the holiday season, Laureano suggests that you spend some time by yourself before the holidays. "Ask yourself what you are grateful for in your life, connect to your childhood memories of past holidays and identify what triggers your stress and your reactions to it.

"Think back to the people, the smells and the traditions. Find that happy space or time," she said. "Then think about your stress triggers and how you react." The goal is to create a new attitude with a new reaction. You have no control over the behavior of relatives, but you can be responsible for how you behave.

Don't let holiday anxiety get the best of you this season. Let this be your best-ever holiday season by enjoying the spirit while keeping your body and mind healthy during the holidays with these tips for beating holiday stress.

*When something is out of your control, take a deep breath and let the stress go. "This can be an 'in the moment' stress buster," suggested Laureano.

- ❖ Go with the flow, let go of control.
- ❖ Ask for help and talk to a friend or spouse.
- ❖ Organize your time and put it on the calendar. Don't overload your schedule, it will make you tired, cranky and overwhelmed.
- ❖ Choose your priorities and do what you want to do.
- ❖ Make time for exercise, even 30 minutes each day.
- ❖ Make regular "me time." No phones, no e-mail, no kids, just you. Meditate, do some yoga-inspired or Pilates moves, take a bubble bath or a walk, get a massage. No matter what you do, make sure it is something YOU want to do and love to do.
- ❖ Shop during the off-times and consider having your presents wrapped when you buy them.
- ❖ Volunteer or get a group together and go caroling.
- ❖ Find the kid within. Go outside and make snow angels, build a snowman, have a snowball fight.
- ❖ Smile. You just may make someone's day.

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