How to Reduce Holiday Stress

While Christmas is known as "the season to be jolly," it can be a significant source of stress, pressure, and conflict for many of us. Some people can feel overwhelmed by the excess, expectations, and exchange and become depressed during the holidays.

A lack of time and money, credit card debt, and the pressure of gift giving can often contribute to stress during the holiday season. Most of us are aware of the adverse effects that stress can have on our body. It can impact our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and it can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity if left unchecked.

In fact, research has shown that there is an increase in the occurrence of heart attacks and heart-related deaths during the festive season, which may be due to stress, heavy alcohol consumption, a fatty diet, or all three. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that holiday stress is dealt with — pronto.

With all the cooking, decorating, visiting, and gift giving, the holidays can seem more like trying to meet a high-pressure deadline than a vacation. So, try these Christmas stress-busting strategies to ease the strain and help stress melt away.

1. **Limit Spending.**
   Money issues are one of the leading causes of stress during the holiday season, according to a poll conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2004. Recent data collected in the APA’s annual Stress in America survey reflect this finding and report that 62 percent of us feel stressed about money. 
   Set a budget. First of all, make sure that all your usual expenses are accounted for so that you do not fall short on bills such as rent. Plan for any other spending over the holidays, including any parties you may be hosting or traveling to visit friends or family. 
   Make one financial decision at a time. Make sure that you space spending-related decisions out. Trying to make too many decisions at once can be overwhelming, which can lead to depletion of your willpower and an increased risk of overspending.

2. **Go for a walk.**
   The antidote for holiday stress could be just as simple as taking a walk. Research demonstrates that physical activity reorganizes the brain in such a way that it reduces its response to stress. Regular exercise can help to decrease tension and boost and stabilize mood. Furthermore, exercising produces endorphins — natural painkilling chemicals that are released in the brain — that improve your ability to sleep and reduce stress.

3. **Have fun.**
   As you decorate the tree or bake festive cookies, forget all the items left on your to-do list and give yourself permission to have fun. Laughter lightens your mood, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and also releases endorphins. Laughter also boosts circulation, helps muscles relax, and lessens the physical symptoms that are associated with stress.

Whether your laughter is powered by sidesplitting moments in your favorite movie, jokes at the dinner table, a holiday prank, or an afternoon of fun activities, even looking forward to a funny event raises relaxation-inducing hormones and decreases stress hormones.

Source: Medical News Today
Healthy Cooking: Leftover Turkey and Mashed Potatoes Enchilada Skillet

**Ingredients:**
- 2 cups store-bough or homemade enchilada sauce
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 medium white onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup leftover mashed regular or sweet potatoes
- 2 cups leftover shredded turkey
- 6 corn tortillas, cut into 1-inch strips
- 1 cup Mexican shredded cheese, divided
- Cilantro, green onions, and/or Greek yogurt, for serving

**Directions:**
1. Heat olive oil over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add onions and garlic, and cook for 4-5 minutes—until onion is translucent, and garlic is fragrant.
2. Add turkey and spoonfuls of mashed potatoes, and stir until combined.
3. Add the corn tortillas and all of the enchilada sauce, and stir to combine. Reduce heat to low, and stir in 1/2 cup of cheese. Simmer for 4-5 minutes.
4. Sprinkle another 1/2 cup on top, and cover for 5 minutes to melt the cheese. Serve!

Yo U R Compliance Connection with Kris Henderson, Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator

**National Ethics and Compliance Week Recap**

Last month, the University celebrated National Ethics and Compliance Week. This annual event is designed to build awareness of compliance, reinforce our policies and regulations, strengthen our overall culture of compliance, and to have a little fun. A big thank you to all who participated in the week’s activities. In case you missed the week’s winners, here is a list of our lucky colleagues:

**Movie Ticket winners:** Cindy Stearns (Dining Services), Shani Buchholz (Office of Common Ground), Jasleen Singh (President’s Office), Noel Brooking (Campus Events), Katy Oleny (Law School)

**Gift Basket winners:** Susan Taylor on behalf of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies Dean’s Office, Iria Jones on behalf of Boatwright Library, Rachel Weinberg-Rue on behalf of the Financial Aid office

**Trainings**

Ever wonder why you are asked to complete the compliance trainings? Compliance is really all about education. It would be very hard for anyone to follow our policies, rules, or regulations if they didn’t know what they covered. Education through training is our way of making sure everyone knows what those polices, rules, and regulation are all about.

Speaking of training, this is a quick reminder to complete your Cybersecurity training by the end of the calendar year. You can access the module through Talent Web.

**Spider Ready**

As the temperatures begin to drop, we all know that stormy weather is bound to arrive as well. Be prepared for whatever comes your way, weather or otherwise, by attending the January 21 session of Cookies with Compliance, Spider Ready, with Brittany Schaal, Director of Emergency Management. All sessions for this series begin at 2:00 p.m. in THC 321.
Educational Corner: Why You Need Deep Sleep

The deep stages of sleep may give the brain a chance to wash itself free of potentially toxic substances, a new study suggests. Researchers found that during deep sleep, the "slow-wave" activity of nerve cells appears to make room for cerebral spinal fluid to rhythmically move in and out of the brain -- a process believed to rinse out metabolic waste products.

Those waste products include beta-amyloid -- a protein that clumps abnormally in the brains of people with dementia, said researcher Laura Lewis, an assistant professor of biomedical engineering at Boston University. Lewis stressed that the findings, reported in the Nov. 1 issue of Science, do not prove that deep sleep helps ward off dementia or other diseases.

But the ultimate goal of research like this is to understand why poor sleep quality is linked to higher risks of various chronic conditions, from dementia to heart disease to depression, she said. Researchers have known that cerebral spinal fluid, or CSF, helps clear metabolic byproducts from the brain, so that they do not build up there. They've also known that the process appears to amp up during sleep, but various "hows" and "whys" remained.

So the investigators recruited 11 healthy adults for a sleep study using noninvasive techniques: advanced MRI to monitor fluid flow in the brain, and electroencephalograms to gauge electrical activity in brain cells. Sleep is marked by REM and non-REM cycles. During REM sleep, breathing and heart rates are relatively higher, and people often have vivid dreams. Non-REM sleep includes stages of deep -- or slow-wave -- sleep. During those stages, there's a slow-down in brain cell activity, heart rate and blood flow, and research has found that deep sleep may aid memory consolidation and allow the brain to recover from the daily grind.

"There are all these fundamental things your brain is taking care of during deep sleep," Lewis said.

Her team found that housecleaning may be one. When study participants were in deep sleep, each pulse in slow-wave brain activity was followed by oscillations in blood flow and volume, which allowed CSF to flow into fluid-filled cavities in the central brain.

CSF moved in "large, pulsing waves" that were seen only during deep sleep, Lewis explained. Based on what's known about the work of CSF, experts said it's reasonable to conclude that slow-wave sleep promotes the flushing of waste from the brain. The study "elegantly" illustrates the importance of deep sleep, according to Dr. Phyllis Zee, a sleep medicine specialist not involved in the work.

Other research has suggested that sleep loss can promote the buildup of "unwanted proteins" in the brain, said Malhotra, who also serves on the board of directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. A recent government study, for instance, found that one night of sleep deprivation triggered an increase in beta-amyloid in the brains of healthy adults.

"As we learn more about this role of sleep," Malhotra said, "it may help explain why individuals who don't get enough sleep, or suffer from sleep disorders, are at higher risk of certain chronic health conditions."

The latest study involved younger adults with no health problems. Lewis said that it will be important to find out whether healthy older adults, or people with certain health conditions, show any differences in CSF dynamics during deep sleep.

A big question for future research, she said, will be whether alterations in those dynamics precede the development of disease.

Source: WebMD
Americans gain about 1-2 pounds during the holidays. While this doesn’t seem to be a lot, research shows that it adds up over the years. Below are some tips on how to stay healthy over the Holidays.

1. **Don’t skip meals**
   Skipping meals leading up to a party or gathering may result in overeating. Include lots of fiber in meals leading up to the party by eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains to increase satiety but are also lower in calories.

2. **Eat small portions**
   Holiday meals and parties tend to have a lot of food. Survey the buffet table or appetizers prior to putting anything on your plate. Choose the foods that look appealing to you but get smaller portions of them so you can taste a variety of foods. However, don’t forget to fill your plates with fruit and vegetables too. You should aim for ⅓ of your plate fruits and vegetables, ⅓ plate protein and ¼ plate carbohydrates.

3. **Strategies to avoid overeating**
   Use a smaller plate which encourages proper portion sizes. Also, start filling your plate with vegetables and salad before going to the entrees, sides and desserts. Eat slowly and savor every bite, and before you go back for seconds, wait 10 minutes to see if you are really still hungry.

4. **Keep moving**
   After dinner, go for a walk to get some physical activity. This is a great time to catch up with family members. Other ideas are to play catch or play a game of basketball with the kids.