



The Wellness Family

Dr. Van Fossen Keeps You Informed

De-Stressing the Holidays

A poll by the American Psychological Association has found that during the holidays 69% of people are stressed by a "lack of time", 69% are stressed by a "lack of money" and 51% are stressed over the "pressure to give or get gifts". That's a lot of stress for what should be the most joyous time of year.

The Dangers of Stress

Reducing stress during the holidays can have far-reaching positive effects on our health. First, take into account that stress negatively affects the spine. Stress causes the muscles in the back and neck to tense, which can cause the vertebrae in the spine to shift, creating subluxation or nerve interference. This in turn may result in symptoms that can be mistaken for common illnesses. For instance, nerve interference in the neck may result in a stuffed up or runny nose. Similar subluxations in the middle back may cause difficulty with digestion and elimination.

Stress can also create its own physical issues including: inflammation, high cortisol levels leading to weight gain, sleep interference (which results in its own problems), metabolic disorders, gastrointestinal distress and more.

Since the majority of people will claim at least a modest level of stress any other day of the year, it's important to try not to add to that with the holiday season.

Technology Works "For" You

There are many ways that Facebook and Smartphones can work for you in helping to de-stress your holidays with the most obvious being scheduling family gatherings and other holiday parties.

First, the basic Facebook "Events" works great as a way to create an event and then invite those that you wish to attend. As long as your friend or family member is also on Facebook they'll be able to accept your invite, send an invite to others and you'll have a pretty reliable headcount. Remember that typically only about 60% of those who say they are going to attend actually do.

A second option is to create a fan page or group for your event. This allows for a lot more flexibility in what others can share with you regarding their attendance. They can post the items they'll bring or who will be attending with them, etc. With this option you can also post Word documents that can include the menu or a wish list of what you need others to volunteer to bring or areas where they can assist.

Creating a shopping list with a budget causing you stress? There's an app for that. Santa's Bag, Gift List, Gift Plan, and more are available at iTunes. Gift List Manager, Christmas Gift List and more can be purchased for Androids.

Technology Works "Against" You

While some people can make technology work for them, perhaps you're one of the many Facebook and Smartphone users that have found that technology seems to be just one more thing you "have to do". Overstimulation can add to stress and time spent in front of Facebook or on your phone is time that can be put to better use during what's already a pretty busy time of year. It may be time to disengage from technology.



Recognizing our limitations and acknowledging the need to take a breather may be the best step to de-stress.

Smartphones can become a major source of stress when it makes it possible for you to be contacted at any time night or day: after work hours, weekends, holidays and more. It may be time for you to turn off your phone and focus on the other areas of your life that are more valuable to you.

Facebook can also become a major time drain from which it may be time to walk away. Post a status wishing everyone "Happy Holidays" let them know that you'll "see them in January" and then disengage. It's okay to let technology work for you but what if it's part of the problem? Step back, look at your technology use then consider if it's an area where you need to de-stress.

Family Time

Adam Anderson, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, has hypothesized that media may be the cause of most stress during the holidays. With all of the commercials and movies showing happy, smiling families gathering together for the holidays, it can be a harsh spotlight on a lonely family member. A Canadian study of patients that received emergency

psychiatric care during the holidays found that the most common stressor was feeling alone or not having family. It's also not uncommon to be a little melancholy during this time of year if there's been a recent loss in the family or if a couple is dealing with a recent empty-nest.

Holiday get-togethers can be a glaring reminder of the missing family member and it's important to recognize that there's nothing wrong with acknowledging negative feelings. However, it's vital to not let these feelings take over completely. Try to remember the positive and focus on the present: reach out to family, volunteer at a soup kitchen or just phone a friend. It may be the best time to travel or perhaps there is an opportunity to be part of a mission trip to a third world country. Make a way to connect with others and stay busy as this will help to avoid feelings of loneliness.

Meditation or Quiet Reflection

Letting feelings of stress, depression or aggravation build without interruption is similar to a pressure cooker: steam needs to be released a little at a time or eventually it's going to blow. Recognizing our limitations and acknowledging the need to take a breather may be the best step to de-stress.

It may be as simple as taking five minutes to list in your mind the three things for which you are the most grateful and focusing all of your energy on those three things. Think about why you are grateful for them, how they came to be in your life or what makes them so special to you. Research has shown that gratitude has both physical and mental benefits including: a stronger immune system, lower blood pressure, more restful sleep and the tendency to have a healthier diet and exercise lifestyle.

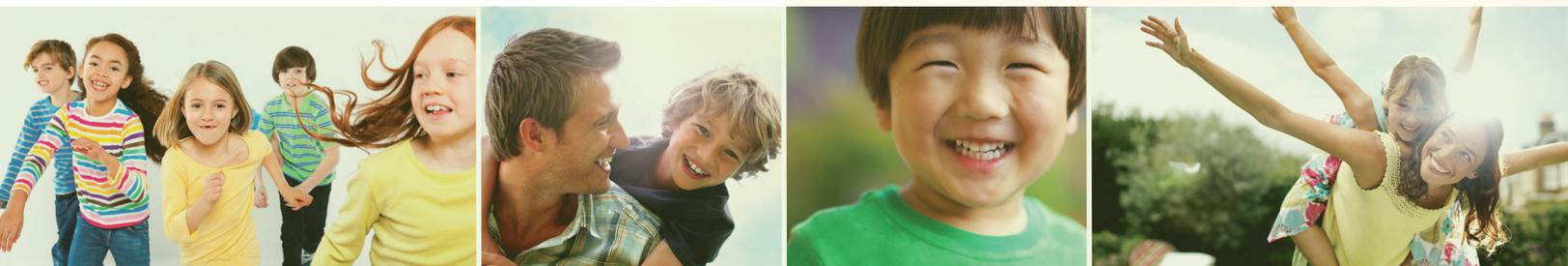
Meditation can be achieved through Yoga but also through focused breathing. Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, rest your hands comfortably and focus on your actual breathing. Concentrate on each inhalation and exhalation. Try to clear your mind, especially of whatever is causing your stress.

Quiet reflection or a quiet time may include writing in a journal or drawing a picture; or it may be spent in quiet contemplation of your life or in spiritual communication. What it boils down to is that any of these examples of bringing yourself to a place of internal peace and quiet should have a positive effect on your stress levels.

In Summary

Everyone is different and stress affects everyone differently. For some the best way to relieve stress is to shut out the world and find your peace; and for others the presence of family, friends and loved ones is the answer. For some using technology to bring everything together will solve all of life's problems; and for others technology is the problem. Whatever the cause of your stress there is a way to diffuse it.

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor recognizes the importance of having a stress-free, joy-filled holiday season but, perhaps more importantly, they understand the damage that can be caused by holiday stress. This time of the year is when your regular adjustments may be the most beneficial so be sure to make your chiropractic appointments a priority.



*Dear Patient,
Dr. Van Fossen is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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