Dreaming of a Stress-free Holiday

Shannon Moseley, M.S.

The holidays are upon us and with such festivities and traditions come a lot of time with family and friends. For some, this can be glorious celebration and fun. For many others, it can be increased distress and unhappiness. Family gatherings to celebrate the season can also be feted with conflicts, disagreements, and arguments. As George Burns once said, “Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family……in another city.”

Here are several tips offered by “BeWell@Stanford”. Choosing any one of these can make for a more enjoyable holiday season:

- Identify what is about the holidays that get you down. Once identified, deal with it directly.
- If doing the “same old thing” gets you down, don’t do the same old thing.
- Don’t expect miracles; keep your expectations of others and self realistic.
- Don’t “overdo”: plan ahead of time, prioritize what needs to be done and try to involve others with the preparation.
- Don’t worry about how things should be or what you should do but do what you can do and more importantly what you want to do.
- If the holidays make you feel out of control, “take control” over the holidays by taking timeouts for yourself. Have more self-compassion and accept your limitations.
- Use humor; try to see the lighter side of life and not take yourself so seriously.
- Stick to a budget for gift giving and food shopping, or even consider alternatives to gift giving.
- Minimize over-indulging in food and alcohol as way to cope with stress.

Please keep in mind that while you do not have the ability to control what other people do or say, you do have the power to control how you react and what activities you engage in. Here’s one final quote from Viktor Frankl to keep at the forefront of your mind as you prepare for the celebratory times: “Between stimulus and response there is space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.” Be kind, loving, and compassionate to yourself but mostly, give yourself that space.

With finals approaching we are offering you an opportunity to take some time out and de-stress. Please look for our “Relaxation Station” on Wednesday, December 9th at the RSC Atrium.

The Counseling Center wishes you a very happy holiday season.