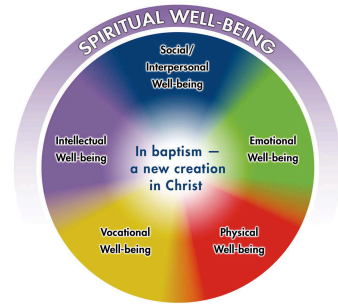


Surviving Holidays

A handout from the Bethany Lutheran Church Health and Wellness Cabinet



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“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.” – (Proverbs 17:1)

There is a joyous occasion approaching. We will soon celebrate the birth of Christ with songs, prayers, and adoration in many forms. We will also soon be in the midst of The Holiday Season, one that is partially defined by the media, cultural tradition, and our own expectations. If your family holiday resembles a living Norman Rockwell painting, bless you, but for some of us maintaining perspective during the holiday requires fervent prayer.

Remembering that health in body, mind, and spirit includes stewardship of our own bodies, minds, and spirits, the following guidance was gleaned from several sources that give advice on health issues at this time of year. Some may be relevant to you this season, some won't be. It is a Christmas gift from your Health and Wellness Cabinet to you and yours.

Be mindful about eating

Around Christmas time eating habits change for many of us. Snacks are too readily available around the house and workplace, and we can fall victim to automatically reaching for those many sweets and savories that can pile on the weight. Consider having bowls of fruit available (grapes and berries, for example), and go easy on the chocolates and nuts. If you drink alcoholic beverages, remember that it is harder for your liver to metabolize alcohol if your sugar intake has been high – use moderation.

Move your body

As you are able, and barring bad weather, plan to walk. Getting the family together for a walk after a holiday meal can be a great way to enjoy each other's company – and don't forget to take the dog. Even indoor exercise can be helpful, just remember to build in some form of healthy movement in your day.

Be sensitive to others

Not everyone finds the Holiday Season to be a pleasant time. Be sensitive to the feelings of those around you, especially if there has been a loss or bereavement. Even happy events can cause emotional stress, so stay aware and think twice about potentially hazardous topics during family conversation – and it may be better to just let some things that are said pass without response.

Plan to avoid stress

Make a list of the things that you “need” to do. Put the most important first, and if you can't get to all of them within reasonable time and energy expenditure, cross some off of the bottom of the list. Plan rest time into your Christmas day and other days off. Family and church are important to teenagers, even if they would rather be somewhere else, and trying to retrieve absent family members just before an event can be pretty trying. Try to work out in advance a schedule that puts some balance between family time and time with friends.

Be thoughtful about customs

Customs are important to families and often are part of long standing tradition. But they can also cause unnecessary stress if they become limiting or critical to a successful holiday. Think about your family customs, special things that you do during the holidays. Are they still useful and desirable, or should some change? This is especially relevant to new families formed through marriage or other means, where there may be two different traditions coming together. Keep what is good from the old, and don't be afraid to add new elements to create shared customs.

And finally, keep the perspective of why we have the holiday. It is a birthday celebration, after all, the herald of a wondrous event. Merry Christmas!

If you have questions, please contact Jack Lindsey of the Bethany HWC at drjacklindsey@earthlink.net.

Resources:

Parenting and Child Health article:

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=99&id=1564>

Healthy snack recipes (with videos):

http://www.ifood.tv/network/healthy_christmas_snacks/recipes

Healthy Christmas gifts:

http://www.health24.com/Woman/Special_events/711-3614-3616.25510.asp

Mental Health and The Season:

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/mental_health/12045

And regarding our four-footed friends:

http://www.my-dog.info/dog-care/christmas_tips.asp