

## YOUR HEALTH & THE HOLIDAYS



### WELLNESS OBSERVANCES

UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONTH

12/5: INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

12/4-10: NATIONAL HAND WASHING  
AWARENESS WEEK

### IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 4 MINDFUL TIPS TO  
DESTRESS THIS HOLIDAY  
SEASON
- 3 HOW TO MAKE YOUR  
HEALTH A PRIORITY  
DURING THE HOLIDAYS

#### MINDFUL MOMENTS:

- 10 MINUTE MEDITATION TO  
EASE HOLIDAY STRESS

#### NOURISH:

- 7 • RECIPE: PERFECT ROASTED  
BROCCOLI WITH VEGAN  
PARM

Newsletter Created By:  
Jordan Simone  
COTA/L, CHC, RYT-200  
ACM JIF Wellness Director

# 4 Mindful Tips to Destress THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

## NOT FEELING PARTICULARLY CHEERY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON? YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

Many find that the holidays bring as much stress as they do joy. But there are ways to ease through the season. To help make the most of your festivities, Neda Gould, Ph.D., clinical psychologist and director of the Johns Hopkins Mindfulness Program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, shares some mindful tips.

What is mindfulness? “Mindfulness is bringing your attention to the present moment with an element of nonjudgment and acceptance. It is noticing when we get caught up in thoughts about the past or the future, and returning our attention to the present — the only reality,” explains Gould.

While mindfulness can be a formal meditation practice, there are also informal ways to practice this skill. This can give us perspective and decrease stress.

Gould shares four ways to make your holidays brighter:  
(cont. on next page)

### ACCEPT IMPERFECTION:

Can good be good enough? “As we gear up for the holidays, we often set the bar impossibly high for ourselves and then feel upset when our celebrations don’t live up to expectations,” says Gould.

Before you start preparing, acknowledge that things may not go exactly as planned. “It’s OK if it’s not perfect. Imperfection is healthy and normal. For some of us, it might just take a little practice,” reminds Gould.

# 4 Mindful Tips to Destress

## THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

### DON'T LOST SIGHT OF WHAT REALLY COUNTS:

With long lines and nasty traffic, the holidays can get hectic. When overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle, ask yourself:

- Where does this fit in the grand scheme of things? If you're frustrated by the long grocery line you're standing in, remember that it is just a long grocery line — nothing more. Don't let it spoil your afternoon.
- Can I use this moment of frustration as an opportunity to reflect? While the cashier rings up the customers ahead of you, take inventory of the good things that have happened today or the things you are grateful for.
- Even if this moment seems stressful, can I find a way to make it pleasant? Connect with someone else in line with a compliment or kind gesture, or notice what's around you with fresh eyes and an open mind.

### RESPOND WITH KINDNESS

You can't change how others act during the stresses of the holiday season, but you can change how you respond to situations:

- "Whenever I encounter a difficult person, I tell myself, 'this person is suffering, and that's why they're acting this way.' It softens my frustration, helps me be more compassionate and reminds me that it's not personal," says Gould.
- Keep in mind that the holidays are especially difficult for those who are alone. See if you can extend an act of kindness to those you know are without family and friends during this time of year.
- If things do get tense with someone, take a few deep breaths. "Those few breaths can shift things and give you new perspective," says Gould.

### RETHINK YOUR RESOLUTIONS

"Typical New Year's resolutions set you up for failure," warns Gould. If you want to better yourself in the New Year, follow these tips for success:

- Start small. Break your goal into tinier steps over the course of the year. If weight loss is your goal, it doesn't have to be drastic. Try to eat more veggies during your first month and gradually cut back on sweets throughout the next, suggests Gould.
- Be kind to yourself. If you didn't achieve last year's resolution or stray from the path this time around, let it go. "We often contrive these stories ('I'm never going to quit smoking!') that only add to our distress," says Gould. "With practice, we can notice this self-critic, let go of that negativity and pick our goals back up without the guilt or shame."

# How to Make Your Health

## A PRIORITY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

### EAT MINDFULLY

When you're eating, sit back and allow yourself to truly enjoy your favorite holiday flavors. Pay attention to the taste, aroma and texture of the foods. "When the attention shifts from your body, redirect it back to your internal fullness and satisfaction cues," says Alissa Rumsey, a New York-based dietitian, nutrition therapist and owner of Alissa Rumsey Nutrition and Wellness. Since it takes a few minutes for your stomach's "I'm full signal" to reach your brain, it's advisable to take a 10-minute break after your first helping, suggests Patrick Skerrett in a Harvard Health Blog article. "You might realize you are full or want only a small portion of seconds," explains the author. Other than that, don't attend a party on an empty stomach as it makes you prone to overeating. As for the dessert, eat only one or two dishes you really love instead of sampling each and every option available on the table.

### STAY HYDRATED

"Water accounts for 60% of our body's total weight and we need to stay hydrated in order to maintain this ratio. Water is also necessary for several bodily functions, including maintaining our cell's fluids and delivering nutrients," notes Rumsey. Drink plain or infused H2O as often as you can throughout the day. Limit your intake of high-calorie drinks like eggnog, martinis and margaritas. "If you're consuming alcoholic beverages over the holidays, try alternating with glasses of water in between your cocktails. Your body will thank you the next morning!" says the nutrition expert.

### CHOOSE HEALTHY SUBSTITUTES

With a few simple diet tweaks, you can indulge in your favorite holiday foods without packing serious pounds. For instance, replace sour cream with greek yogurt in your favorite holiday recipes. Trade mashed potato with mashed sweet potato. And swap heavy dips like blue cheese dip and spinach and artichoke dip with healthy bean-based dips and homemade hummus. In addition, choose broth-based soups over heavy, cream-based ones. And opt for lighter cheeses like cottage cheese, soft goat cheese and feta cheese instead of calorie-dense blue cheese, cream cheese or reduced-fat cheddar cheese. Additionally, load up on roasted veggies and lightly-dressed salads before reaching for ham or green bean casserole. You can also sneak in more vegetables in your diet by having a smoothie for breakfast or a snack.

# How to Make Your Health

## A PRIORITY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

### REINVENT YOUR HOLIDAY WORKOUT

It might be a bit challenging to make time for a sweat sesh when your social calendar and to-do lists are jam-packed. In order to stay motivated, plan your workout regimen around your holiday schedule. Instead of the usual 30-minute routine, do a 15-minute workout in the morning and evening or go for a 10-minute walk twice daily. The aim is to split your physical activity into smaller, more manageable time intervals. If you don't have time to hit the gym, workout in the comfort of your home with the help of online tutorials and fitness apps.

### BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

"Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables is one of the best things you can do to bolster your immune system. This will ensure you're getting some top immune-boosting nutrients, including vitamin C and vitamin A," says Cassetty. Eating a handful of nuts and seeds daily is also a great way to fight illness as they contain immune-boosting minerals such as zinc and selenium, she adds.

### MAKE TIME FOR SELF-CARE

Don't let the holiday madness take a toll on your mental and emotional health. Whether you're caught up in cooking, holiday shopping or socializing, don't put your needs on the back burner. Take some time off to relax and unwind – go for a walk, meditate, watch your favorite movie or read a good book, do at least one thing every day that makes you truly happy. In addition, get adequate sleep. "Shortchanging your sleep can alter your hormone levels in a way that encourages weight gain and cravings for less healthy food. Try to get the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep on most nights," says Cassetty.

# Mindful Moments

## [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO A 10-MINUTE MEDITATION TO EASE HOLIDAY STRESS](#)

- Start by settling your mind and body by taking a few deep breaths. Mindfulness practice is an opportunity to build an ability to observe without our normal reactive spirals. For a few moments, we take a break from escalating our holiday stress.
- Check in. Notice whatever is going on for you right now, and then come back to the breath. Whether you feel stressed, relaxed, or anything else, for a moment, let it all be. Without judgment or expectation, just notice it all, and come back to the next breath.
- Now, picture the next few weeks. Take a moment to notice what comes to mind when you picture the holiday season. How does your body feel: is it tight, or restless, or even nauseated, or exhausted? Notice that, and let it be, and then come back to the breath.
- Label emotions. What emotions arise? Maybe there is some mix of excitement and joy and dread and tiredness. Where do your thoughts go? Perhaps there's a conflicting swirl of pictures of what might be, stress over what seems possible, or ruminative planning over presents.
- Relax into the breath. Right now, there's nothing to do, no one to be, nowhere to go. In this moment, sitting, this is all there is. Some other time might be for acting or thinking. Right now, take care of anything emergent, but otherwise let go of fixing and moving, and focus on the next breath again.
- Shift your attention to someone you care about. Now take a few moments to focus on your friends and family. Picture them, and wish them well, wherever they are: peace, or health, or safety.
- Now focus on yourself. This is a time of stress, perhaps. Wish yourself whatever you did for your family: ease, or peace, or happiness. Take a moment to be grateful for whatever comes to mind.
- Practice, as best as you're able, letting go. That picture of the meal, or that snub, or a storm derailing your plan—they're all just thoughts. Notice craving and the hungry ghost who always wants more. Label it all, if you like, thought. Don't wrestle with it, and don't engage with it quite as much. Note: thought, and then come back to... Breathing in, and breathing out.

# Nourish

## PERFECT ROASTED BROCCOLI WITH VEGAN PARM

By: *Minimalist Baker*

### ingredients

- 4 cups small broccoli florets (2 heads broccoli yield ~4 cups florets)
- 2 Tbsp olive oil (or avocado oil)
- 1/4 cup vegan parmesan cheese
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 2 cloves minced garlic (optional)

### recipe preparation

- Preheat the oven to 425 F (215 C) and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Optional: For more tender and easier to digest broccoli our preferred method is to lightly steam it first. To steam the broccoli, place a steamer basket in a large pot. Fill the pot with at least 1/4-inch of water, but not so much that it touches the bottom of the steamer basket. Bring water to a boil, then add broccoli florets to the steamer basket and cook for 2-4 minutes or until bright green and just tender enough to pierce with a fork. Remove from the pot and set aside until cool enough to handle.
- To the parchment-lined baking sheet, add (raw or steamed) broccoli florets. Drizzle with oil then sprinkle with vegan parmesan cheese, salt, and garlic (optional). Toss to evenly coat the broccoli, making sure each floret is laying on its flattest side and no florets are overlapping.
- Bake for 10-15 minutes or until broccoli is golden brown on the edges and tender when pierced with a fork.
- Best when fresh. Leftovers will keep stored in a sealed container in the refrigerator for 2-3 days. Reheat leftovers in a cast-iron skillet until warmed through. Not freezer friendly.

