

Baltimore County Department of Health, Bureau of Behavioral Health

Holidays...Celebrate...In a Healthy Way

It's getting to be that time of the year, and, if you're like many, you're probably facing the holidays with a healthy mixture of hope, excitement and a sense of being overwhelmed. It's not uncommon to feel some stress in a season of gift and to-do lists, family get-togethers and parties. Parties feature opportunities and often the "permission" to eat and drink more.

As a parent or caregiver, you serve as a role model for your children. Never could the old adage, "actions speak louder than words", be truer than when it comes to raising kids. As a result, we'd like to offer the following tips to help you and your family have a healthy and safe holiday.

Tips for a healthy holiday season:

1. Lower your expectations. Don't expect perfection and don't compare your family to neighbors, friends or those you see on TV.
2. Prioritize your time and learn to say no. People who feel overwhelmed often have too much on their plate. Turning down an invitation from a friend might be hard, but can be rewarding if it opens up time to rest, recharge or for a more meaningful activity.
3. Eat regular, well-balanced meals. The holidays feature an abundance of sweet, rich food -- try to balance it out with vegetables and fruit.
4. Take time to exercise, laugh and have fun. Get to the gym or incorporate some walks into your day. Doing so will help boost your endorphins, reduce tension and assist you with maintaining a better perspective.
5. Make time for enough rest and relaxation or downtime. Try and get eight hours sleep each night and see how it impacts your mood and energy.
6. Be present with those you love. Make your home a "no-work" zone this season and focus on spending quality time with those you love. Turn off your phone, computer and stop checking email.
7. Create your own family rituals. Incorporate meaningful activities like getting involved in a local charity event or drive.
8. Don't use drugs. If they're prescription, follow the recommended dose. Keep your prescription medication in a locked, secured place so they don't fall into curious hands.
9. Drink moderately and don't drive while intoxicated or under the influence.
10. If you need to express your feelings, talk with a friend, loved one or someone you trust.

During the holidays, some people think getting high, buzzed or drunk will alleviate stress. In reality, doing so can only make matters worse or, when it comes to driving while intoxicated, place you and those you love in dangerous situations. Self-care can be different for different people, but be encouraged to practice daily habits that foster health and happiness for you and your family and, to get help if you're having trouble doing so.

For more information on wellness and managing your mental health, visit:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/eight-dimensions-wellness>