



PRIORITIZING Family Wellbeing THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

As the holiday season approaches, it's the perfect time to focus on family wellness. You can create lasting memories and strengthen your family bonds by prioritizing health, happiness and togetherness. Here are some tips to get started:

Prioritize Healthy Habits

Encourage regular physical activity:

Find family-friendly activities like hiking, skiing, biking or playing sports together.

Nourish your bodies: Prepare nutritious meals and snacks together. Load your plate with produce, lean proteins, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates.

Get enough sleep: Ensure your family gets adequate rest. Since this can be challenging during a season of celebrations, we've included some tips to help you:

- **Stick to a routine:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even with holiday events.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol:** Avoid them in the afternoon and evening as they can disrupt sleep.
- **Limit screen time:** Avoid phones or laptops for at least 30 minutes before bed to help your brain unwind.
- **Set boundaries:** It's okay to say no to late-night events that could interfere with sleep.

Strengthen Family Bonds

Spend quality time together:

Engage in activities everyone enjoys, such as board games, movie nights or family outings.

Practice active listening: Encourage open communication and create a safe space for everyone to express their thoughts and feelings.

Resolve conflicts peacefully:

Use constructive communication and problem-solving skills to address disagreements.

Nurture Mental and Emotional Health

Relax: Teach children and adults the importance of mindfulness and different relaxation techniques, like a mindful nature walk, gratitude circle or mindful eating at the dinner table.

Practice gratitude: A fun way to foster gratitude with your family is the gratitude alphabet game. Each family member takes turns going around the table, sharing something they're grateful for, starting with a letter of the alphabet. The first person starts

with "A" (e.g., "I'm grateful for apples because they are sweet and healthy") and so on through the alphabet.

Seek support: If you or a family member are struggling with mental health, don't hesitate to reach out to loved ones or seek professional help. For crises, use the 988 hotline.

Give Back to Your Community

Volunteer together: Find opportunities to give back to your community as a family. Churches, homeless shelters and soup kitchens often need extra help this time of year.

Support local charities: Donate to organizations that are important to your family. You can even make it a challenge by seeing who can save and donate the most money this holiday season.

Spread kindness and positivity:

Encourage acts of kindness and compassion within your family and community, like shoveling the driveway for a neighbor or dropping off a meal to a loved one.

Pastry-Topped Leftover Turkey Casserole

Prep Time: 45 minutes • Cook Time: 20 minutes
Total Time: 1 hour 5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

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| 2 cups diced red potatoes | $\frac{2}{3}$ cup fat-free evaporated milk |
| 1 large onion, finely chopped | 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed and drained |
| 2 celery ribs, chopped | 2 cups cubed cooked turkey breast |
| 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules | |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed | |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder | |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried thyme | |
| $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper | |
| 1 can (14 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces) reduced-sodium chicken broth | |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water | |
| 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour | |

CRUST

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|--------------------------------------|
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole wheat flour |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder |
| $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt |
| 4 tablespoons fat-free milk, divided |
| 1 tablespoon canola oil |
| Paprika (to taste) |

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat your oven to 400°F degrees. Place the first 10 ingredients in a large saucepan, bringing it to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until potatoes are tender, 10 to 15 minutes.
- In a small bowl, whisk the flour and evaporated milk until smooth. Stir the mix into the pan. Bring it to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Add vegetables and turkey; heat through, stirring occasionally. Transfer to an ungreased 8-inch square baking dish.
- For crust, whisk together the flours, baking powder and salt; stir in 3 tablespoons milk and oil. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thickness; cut into short strips. Arrange over the filling and brush strips with remaining milk; sprinkle with paprika.
- Bake, uncovered, until filling is bubbly, 20 to 25 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Makes 6 servings.

EACH SERVING: Calories: 280, Total fat: 4 g, Saturated fat: 1 g, Sodium: 696 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 38 g, Dietary fiber: 6 g, Sugar: 9 g, Protein: 23 g

Recipe adapted from: tasteofhome.com



How To Do Nothing This Holiday Season

Relaxing isn't always easy and can be daunting to some. In fact, a study showed that participants were so uncomfortable doing nothing that many preferred to give themselves small electric shocks instead.

Some researchers think it's tough to downshift into relaxation mode each day because many of us aren't accustomed to sitting and solely thinking without then putting those thoughts into action. They use a term called "relaxation anxiety" or "relaxation sensitivity" to pinpoint those feelings of discomfort, boredom or unease for some when they attempt to slow down.

For too many of us, guilt is the knee-jerk reaction when we try to do a relaxing activity like reading a book. It instigates that feeling that we "should be doing something" and emphasizes that being productive is better than rest.

But rest and relaxation are completely necessary for overall wellbeing. Routine restorative rest can boost overall health, quality of life and even longevity. Here are some ideas to fortify your most important asset this holiday season – *your health*.

Try an activity-centered form of relaxation.

Pick any activity you find enjoyable that has a single focus, allowing you to toss distractions aside. Some examples include writing in a journal, reading alone or to your kids, cooking, walking, playing music, creating art, etc.

Prevent polluted time by creating boundaries.

When to-do lists, kids' needs or work emails creep into your relaxation time, that becomes "polluted time" and decreases relaxation benefits significantly. Keep your free time free by adding a line to your work email about your working hours, sharing this information with family and friends, or posting your own sticky note reminder about your working hours. When the shop

is closed, it's closed. This holiday season, you can also do a quick energy check-in with yourself before you reply "yes" to an invite.

Release trapped stress in your body.

Stress often presents itself physically before we notice it. Simply relaxing our bodies can help us downshift into a relaxation activity to reap the benefits successfully. Try tensing then releasing muscles around your body to free trapped stress. You might also try simple breathing exercises.

Breathing is key for relaxing effectively because the definition of relaxation simply means activating the parasympathetic nervous system (which handles bodily processes we don't think about, like breathing) rather than using the sympathetic nervous system (which oversees our stress response).

Stop checking your phone.

Some experts call smartphones "adult pacifiers," because phones are ultra-quick at relieving that uncomfortableness of doing nothing. For too many, checking our phones has become automatic and is no longer intentional. When it's time to relax, try your best to avoid checking your phone unintentionally. Instead, consider sending a valued friend a quick message or try watching a funny video to alleviate a little stress from the day.

Reflect on the seven types of rest we need to thrive.

For a starting place, look at what forms of rest you have built into your daily routine currently. The forms range from physical rest to mental, sensory, creative, emotional, social and spiritual rest. Visit MotivateHealth.com for more ideas!

"How to Stop Checking Your Phone Every 10 Seconds," Jamie Ducharme, time.com, Sept. 25, 2024.

"Do Less. It's Good for You," Jamie Ducharme, time.com, June 10, 2024.

"How to Get Real Rest," Donavyn Coffey, time.com, April 22, 2024.