

The Wellness Family

Dr. Cuperus Keeps You Informed

Stress-Free Home for the Holidays

If it's hard to remember a holiday season that wasn't stress-filled, then it's time to take a step back and try to focus on the true purpose. The arrival of December should never feel like a reason to consider hiding out until January.

The holiday season is busy; there's no doubt. With decorating, shopping, family gatherings (some of which will require traveling) and all the other numerous demands on, not just your time, but your family. It's no surprise that this is often considered the most stressful time of year.

Find Some Space

Understanding this, there is one thing you can control: your own home. This is the one place that you can say is going to be your stress-free zone and there are a lot of little things you can do to make this happen.

It's important to remember that all of those demands on your time also place demands on your resources: financial, mental and emotional. Making sure that there is some place where you can de-stress is vital.

Scents of the Season

The most popular and accessible aromatherapies come in the form of scented candles. Vanilla or lavender scents are known to be calming, while pine or lemon are supposed to be invigorating or uplifting; however, a study performed at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel may have added a new twist.

Scientists have proven that scents are one of the most powerful links to our memories. Studies have shown that memories triggered by smells are more vivid and more emotional than those triggered just by sounds. Perhaps this is why the scent of apples and cinnamon can evoke memories of pies in the oven, or the smell of pine and peppermint can bring a rush of emotions from childhood Christmases.

Considering this fact, one of the most beneficial things you can do is find the scents that bring back warm memories for you and your loved ones and place candles or aroma pots with oil strategically around your home. These scents can be placed in all living areas, but be cautious for fire hazards.

Music and Your Mood

Don Campbell, the founder of the Institute for Music, Health, and Education, theorizes that music is linked to measurable changes in body function. Based on your choice of music you can be relaxed or energized, angry or calm, muscles can tense and skin temperature can even change. He has gone so far as to say that music can improve circulation and cardiovascular function. If every thought and feeling has a musical pattern then it's no surprise that music can affect our moods.

Considering this fact, a great way to help your home be your oasis is to put together a CD or collection of CDs that help you feel calmer and more relaxed. Find a



“...demands on your time also place demands on your resources....”

compilation of songs that evokes feelings of peace, and be sure to have them ready to turn on any time that you begin to feel overwhelmed by the holiday season.

This is also an excellent opportunity to introduce your family to a variety of music such as contemporary, classical or multi-cultural.

Apps to the Rescue

Surely the most stress-inducing part of the holidays is the sheer volume of things that you have to do. The usual chores of keeping the house clean, organizing the children's school programs, sporting events, dance recitals, etc. increases to include gift shopping and wrapping, decorating, dinner parties and more.

Apple iTunes has created a few apps that may help. If you don't have an iPhone or iPad, there are other apps that are just as useful for your computer or other handheld devices; a quick Google search will reveal your options.

Two that are definitely helpful to the busy parent include the "Clean Freak Cleaning Schedule" and the "Toodledo To-Do List". The first operates under the

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premise that breaking a project down into smaller pieces makes it easier to accomplish and can be programmed to tell you which rooms need to be cleaned and when each was last cleaned. The other helps you organize your To-Do List into categories based on priority and marked when completed.

Focus on the Family

Probably the hardest thing to remember is that the holidays are supposed to be joyful and not stressful. Taking time to focus on your family and spend time with your children may be a helpful reminder. Arts and crafts projects and special mealtime activities are great ways to connect with your children.

One mealtime activity includes placing photos from past Christmases into a large bowl. Have each family member take a picture out and share a memory based on that photograph. This can lead to shared laughter.

Another activity with photographs is to place pictures of different relatives in the bowl and, once a week, have each child pull a photo from the bowl. They can then write a short note or letter to that family member for the holiday. This activity can also easily be turned into a craft project. The photo can be glued to a piece of cardstock and the child can decorate the photo with sequins, stars and ribbons after writing a brief note on the back. Remember to have the child write the note first as the decorations will make it difficult for the child to place it face down.

If your child doesn't know what to write, help them out by suggesting they write a list titled either, "Five things I love about you" or "Five reasons I'm grateful for you".

With smaller images, you may choose to punch a hole in the top and place ribbon in it so that it can be used as a tree ornament.

Arts and Craft Time

It's never too late to start a new family tradition and your children will love being allowed to participate in the holiday planning and decorating. Consider allowing each of your children the honor of creating the centerpiece for a week.

Using candles, pine branches, ribbons, ornaments, Styrofoam balls and rings, glitter, stickers, clay shapes, foam shapes and more, your children can release their imaginations and create something wonderful to sit in the center of your dinner table. When the week is up, their centerpiece can be gifted to an elderly neighbor or a grandparent.

Children love being involved in the activities of grown-ups, but more than that, they love having something they created be treated as a precious work of art and gifted to someone with care.

Resources

Holiday Movie Lists

kidstvmovies.about.com/od/christmas/tp/topchristmas.htm
entertainment.kaboose.com/movies/christmas-movies.html

Gluten and Casein Free Recipes

www.livingwithout.com
www.celiac.com
gfcfrecipes.blogspot.com
glutenfreemommy.com

Movies on a Budget

Your local library may let you check out videos you can find your local library here
nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/librarysearch/

Track Santa

www.noradsanta.org

Dear Parent,

Dr. Cuperus is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

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