

## Slowing Down Over the Holidays



Holidays can be overwhelming. There's financial stress, family relationships to navigate, baking, eating, traveling....! How can you slow down and connect with what is most important to you?

First, take some time to think and pray about how you would like to feel during the holidays this year. It can be helpful to paint a mental picture and choose words that represent that picture. Don't overthink it – just start writing down words as they pop into your mind. Here's a list to give you a little inspiration, but choose words that are meaningful to you:

**Energized Connected Joyful Present Calm Thankful**

Now go back through your list and pick the two or three that are most important to you. When you decide to do (or not do) something, think about whether or not that action supports how you want to feel. When you are faced with a stressful situation, remember your words and invite God to guide you and be present with you as you seek what feeds your well-being.

Chances are, you already know what these actions are from experience, but they could be things like making sure you have time alone to relax, getting enough sleep at night or getting some type of physical activity every day. Instead of things that we feel like we should do, they now become actions that support our health and happiness.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, you desire our health and well-being. Help me be grounded in what I value the most so that I can enjoy the true meaning of this holiday season.*

## Managing Family Stress During the Holidays

It's the season of joy and reconnecting with family and friends, but the holidays also can be a lonely time for many and family time can be filled with family drama. Dr. Chandra Vedak, a psychiatrist at Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington, IL, recommends these tips:

- **Make gratitude the focus of the day.** It's difficult to be resentful when gratitude is the focus. Count your blessings and express your gratitude for yourself and others.
- **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to be perfect. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you.
- **Hone your people watching skills.** When family members engage in unhealthy interactions, learn to disengage and become an "observer" rather than a participant. Don't add fuel to the fire.
- **Give something personal.** Money can be a major stressor. You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal, but still inexpensive. Use words instead of a gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Ask yourself: Will you remember this one year from now? If not, let it go.
- **Pay attention to your own needs and feelings.** Spend a little time by yourself. Go for a walk. Meditate, or do some relaxation breathing.
- **Don't overindulge in eating or drinking.** Taking care of yourself will help you deal with difficult situations during the holidays.
- **Get support if you need it.** The holidays can sometimes trigger depression. It can be especially difficult if you are already dealing with the death of a loved one or the end of a relationship. You may think that you'll get over "the blues" on your own, but talking with your spiritual leader or doctor about options for counseling or support groups can help with feelings of intense sadness or hopelessness.