

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Handle holiday stress**

The upcoming holiday season can add stress to our daily routines. Atypical schedules, strained finances, family visits and challenging gift purchases for that extended cousin are just a few examples of the seasonal concerns that pile on top of us. This stress brought on by these seasonal “to-dos” can either be positive or negative.

Eustress, the name for “good stress,” can help us to focus and accomplish the tasks we need to get done. *Distress*, on the other hand, is the “bad stress” that overwhelms us, makes us tense and sometimes leads to physical illness.

The pressure that bad stress puts on us to engage in unhealthy activities should not be ignored. Bad stress can contribute to higher blood pressure, higher cholesterol and physical inactivity. When experiencing bad stress, we are also more likely to be tempted to turn to vices such as overeating and smoking.

So how can you mitigate the effects of bad stress this holiday season?

Keep your mind and body ready. With some anticipation and positive thinking you can preemptively turn the negatives into positives. Indulge in the holiday activities you find the most relaxing. Keeping up with regular exercise, a healthy diet and ample rest can also keep your body ready to deal with the added tasks.

Learn to say no. It’s easy to be overwhelmed with many small tasks. Know your boundaries. Only say yes to things you want to do and you will feel less resentful, bitter and overwhelmed.

Manage your finances. Planning ahead to manage finances can go a long way in the holiday season. Decide how much you can comfortably afford before you begin shopping. Consider giving homemade and heartfelt gifts, which can be a cheaper alternative to a commercialized counterpart.

Seek support. The holidays provide a perfect opportunity to reconnect with friends and family. Having a caring ear to listen to you is an asset. If you feel overwhelmed, consider seeking professional help. Psychologists and counselors can offer strategies to help you manage stress, change unhealthy behaviors and address emotional issues.

WVU Extension Service’s Love Your Heart Movement is adapted from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute’s campaign and is targeted to help West Virginians become educated and enabled to take charge of their own health.

To learn more about ways WVU Extension uses trusted research and local experts to empower citizens to improve their health, contact your local WVU Extension Service county office or visit www.ext.wvu.edu.

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