

**What's your happy?
Reflect, share,
celebrate...**

December 2016 Newsletter



**2017...
Here we come!**

**Do you have
“celebration fatigue”?**

Party smarts

**e-Thoughts —
Dealing with the cycle
of life at the holidays**



Get a head start on your
to-do list for next year...
More...

Don't let stress ruin your
holiday spirit...
More...

Tips for holiday get-
togethers...
More...

This year we're celebrating
the holidays after having
lost a loved one — and
gained a new one.
More...

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

2017... Here we come!

December 2016 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

The New Year is just weeks away. You may have made plans to celebrate, but have you started to think about your resolutions? Have you identified any goals for the coming year?

Here's one way to get a head start on 2017. Take some time now to look back on 2016 — and ahead to 2017 — by answering the three questions below:

1. What did you do in 2016 that you want to keep doing?

To help answer this question, open your 2016 appointment book or calendar app on your smartphone. Think back on the events and people that populated the past year.

What did you enjoy? What would you like to repeat? What added to your knowledge or pleasure? What are you grateful for? What do you remember with a laugh or a smile? What were you most proud of? What lessons were most important? What created value? To translate into simple terms, what worked and is worth keeping as you go into 2017?

2. What did you do in 2016 that you want to stop doing?

While you've got that app or calendar in front of you, think about mishaps, mistakes or regrets. We all have them.

See if you can identify: What was frustrating or unsatisfying? What was sad or annoying? What was a "wake up call" to something you didn't know before? Can you see any patterns that didn't work so well for you? Any efforts that were misdirected? Are there habits you'd like to give up? In other words, what would you like to avoid in 2017?

3. What do you want to consider doing in 2017?

This is the fun part: What would you like to try out in the next year? What are some of your goals for 2017?

You don't need to identify all your goals right now. You may have some goals in mind already but more are likely to materialize as 2017 goes along. Developing goals is a process.

Take a moment to celebrate yourself!

Another year has come and gone. You've made it through good times and bad. Congratulations to you! Nice work!

Now you can try the exercise above to specify and control things you want to stop, things you want to continue and things you want to attain. Good luck making 2017 the best year ever!

Do you have “celebration fatigue”?

December 2016 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Here we are, right in the middle of holiday season. Are you feeling cool, calm and collected or stressed out?

If you're feeling relaxed and happy, kudos to you! For most people, however, stress can be at an all-time high during the holidays. So if all the cooking, shopping, sending cards and decorating have you frazzled, you're not alone.

Make a decision to turn down the stress

Even though we're still in the midst of the holidays, you have control over what you do — and don't do — right now and for the next few weeks. It's not too late to make changes that may help you feel better.

Need a little mid-holiday tune-up? Consider these ideas:

- **Cut back on spending... now.** One of the worst things we do to ourselves is to overspend during the holidays. It's not too late to re-examine your upcoming expenses and cut back where you can.
- **Be mindful of the “holiday five.”** Many of us put on five pounds or more this time of year. Why? Partying and food are central themes for the holidays. If you already feel your clothes getting tight, you might consider steps like these:
 - **Don't starve yourself all day to get ready for a party.** Eat normal or light meals so you arrive hungry but not ravenous.
 - **If there's a buffet, go through it only once and then turn your back on it so you're not tempted.**
 - **Be picky about what you eat.** There are lots of yummy, high-calorie treats. But most hosts also serve plenty of healthy choices too. Pick wisely.

- **Check your mood-o-meter.** Feeling tired or cranky? Many normal routines get interrupted during the holidays. Plus your workload may seem bigger than ever when added to holiday activities. These things can have a big impact on your mood and energy.

Some people also feel sad because the holidays may not be perfect. (Are they ever?) The solution? Look out for you right now.

Push away stress by taking better care of yourself starting today

- **Try to get 6-8 hours of sleep every night.** Holiday time or not, we all need sleep to feel good.
- **Maintain your exercise routine.** Exercise is a natural stress reliever. If your doctor's given you the go-ahead, think of exercise as an appointment you need to keep — not an optional activity. Do something every day whether it's a walk or a workout.
- **Respect your right to say no.** You don't need to attend every party, eat every treat or give the most expensive gifts. Do things that make you comfortable and happy.
- **Be real about your feelings.** No one is upbeat all the time — and that includes during holiday season. If you feel down about relationship issues, money, missing loved ones or anything else, talk to a friend, spiritual leader or mental health professional.

Sure, it's holiday time. Still, real life goes on. Remember to keep your work, personal and holiday expectations realistic. You'll feel better physically, mentally and emotionally!

Party smarts

December 2016 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

It's party season and you may be looking forward to celebrations with family, coworkers, neighbors or other friends. Or you might be accompanying your spouse or partner to his or her events.

Whatever types of parties you attend, it's helpful to be aware of good etiquette. Here are some pointers to protect you from party faux pas:

- **Get the details.** Know when the party starts and ends. Respect your host by arriving close to the start time. Sense when the party is winding down and it's time to say goodnight. Get directions ahead of time or plan to use your GPS to ensure you don't arrive late because you're lost.
- **Know the dress code.** You'll want to be dressed to the nines if the invitation calls for cocktail or formal wear. On the other hand, jeans could be just right for a casual event. If you're not sure what "vibe" the host has in mind, check the invitation or call him or her to clarify.
- **Offer your help.** Many hosts already have everything planned but it's nice to offer to bring a dish or a dessert. You can also ask if you can pitch in with setting up, serving or cleaning up. Even if your host says no, the thought will be appreciated.
- **Bring a thank you.** Remember to bring a small personal or house gift to thank the host for including you.
- **Have a snack before the party.** This can be a helpful strategy especially if you're trying to watch calories at this taste-tempting time of year. Having a healthy snack — like veggies or fruit — at home can keep you from arriving at the party famished and ready to eat more than you normally would.

- **Be on your best behavior.** This is especially true for office parties. You may be at a party, but it's still a work event with people you know professionally. Protect your good reputation at work by mingling and having fun but avoid gossiping, flirting or drinking too much. After all, you don't want to be tomorrow morning's water cooler headline.
- **Temper your cocktail count.** There are different reasons why people drink too much alcohol at parties. In many cases, guests over-drink because they feel nervous or awkward; they think a few drinks will help them relax. If you do feel shy, see if you can buddy up with a friend and go to the party together. If you expect to drink, be sure you have a safe plan to get home with a designated driver.

Be the guest you'd like to entertain

Perhaps the best advice is to be the party-goer you'd like to have at your own party. Have fun, socialize, eat and maybe even drink in moderation. Above all, be an asset to the gathering. That's the best way to have fun — and get invited back next year!

e-Thoughts — *Dealing with the cycle of life at the holidays*

December 2016 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

This year we're celebrating the holidays after having lost a loved one — and gained a new one. My father-in-law passed away just a month ago. At 99, he was still one of the most vital people we knew. We'll miss him terribly at our gatherings.

We're also celebrating with a brand new member of the family: a bouncing baby girl. How happy and lucky we are!

Such is the cycle of life. It's not easy but it's a fact. As my father-in-law loved to say, "No one gets out of here alive."

Joy and grief can feel a bit like oil and water — it's tough to imagine them both living in the same space in our hearts. Yet they are the natural ingredients in all of our lives.

If you're celebrating with more or fewer loved ones this year, try to take care of yourself. Focus on the good times with your departed loved ones and, if you have newcomers, let that joy wash away some of your grief if you can. Try to keep the "happy" in your holiday season by sharing with others and using your own time here to live, love and make a difference.

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Monthly Newsletter — December 2016

[Return to index page](#)

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