Guest Column: Keep the Holidays Joyful and Meaningful With These Ideas

Life & Work Connections
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In the hustle and bustle of life, enjoying the holidays with peace, joy and meaning can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are plans we can make now to truly enjoy this season. So, what is on your holiday wish list? Start now with these ideas to help you plan your most meaningful season yet.

Reflect | Take some time to reflect on holidays past. What traditions, foods and events have made the holidays special for you? As you hold these memories, write down a realistic list of what is most important to you this holiday season. Pick two to three essential things to do. Schedule these things now! Remember, even the little things are important!

Bake in something special | When duty calls and you have to shop, bake or complete other things on your to-do list, add a little something to keep positive feelings going. For example, going out to a special lunch on a shopping day, exchanging cookies with a friend, or a having a bonfire after wrapping can give you something to look forward to.

Vow to keep it simple | Let go of perfection. Remind yourself you can't do everything. A few things done well is more valuable and peaceful. Stray from the masses to create a holiday that is truly relaxing and enjoyable for you and yours. Allow plenty of downtime just to enjoy yourself.

See the holidays through a child's eyes | Children have a way of reminding us of the magic of the holidays. After all, they aren't ruled by a schedule as we often are. Children inherently know how to enjoy a moment. Follow the playful lead of a child for a few hours and then see how you feel. Let yourself play!

Take good care of yourself | Rest when you are tired, nourish yourself with healthy food, and move that body. These daily practices are essential to feeling good. Aim to keep your weight stable to avoid feelings of remorse. Consider joining Life & Work Connections' "Maintain, No Gain Holiday Challenge." You can also plan something special just for you like a spa day, holiday movie, hike or staycation.

Choose time to be mindful | Sit somewhere beautiful and allow yourself to reflect on the present moment. Enjoy the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of being in the now. Reminisce. Allow nostalgia.

Show gratitude in stressful situations | Just stopping and noticing your impatience in a checkout line or traffic helps. Redirect yourself from these moments with practices such as noticing beautiful things, listening to music, or noticing what you are grateful for. Use waiting time to your advantage.
**Make it a season of giving** | Find ways to give back that are meaningful to you. Even the little things such as picking up a coffee for a co-worker or writing a small note of gratitude can make someone’s day. Think through ways to give back that are meaningful to you.

**Cherish people** | The holidays are a time of year to embrace people. Cherish your family, friends and co-workers. Be generous with hugs and words of affirmation. Set aside differences with those you have difficulty getting along with. Aim to look for the positive (e.g., “You sure know how to smoke a turkey, Uncle Joe!”) Set boundaries when needed to ensure you are taking care of yourself as well.

**Allow feelings of loss** | Many of us are reminded of loved ones we have lost during this time of year. These feelings are completely normal. Consider a ritual to remember your loved one. Perhaps light a candle in their honor and keep it going for a full day.

Most importantly, create a holiday season that works for you! Be kind, generous and intentional and the goodness will follow. Best wishes for a very peaceful and meaningful holiday season!

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