

lighten up your life



Our wish for you this holiday season:
a new year of serenity, prosperity today
and always, happiness that multiplies,
health for you and your family, and the
energy to pursue your dreams!



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Women

Lighten Up Your Life is powered by Spirit of Women®, a national network of hospitals and healthcare providers across the United States that ascribe to the highest standards of excellence in women's health, education, and community outreach.

Health is Action®

Did you know that more Americans die from cardiac episodes between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day than at any other time of year? This December, *lighten up your life* by embracing simple pleasures and keeping your immune system resilient so that you can tackle the holiday with ease. As we enter this busiest of seasons, let us practice positive thinking, love, patience, and light-heartedness. Instead of falling prey to pressure and worry in the coming weeks, make it your mission to start an epidemic of positivity and kindness!

Most people would say the holidays represent togetherness, but the truth is that few of us are impervious to stress during all the festivities - stress that includes meeting time constraints, becoming the "perfect" host, and catering the "perfect" holiday party, which tends to leave us tense and rigid. Women in particular experience more pressure and derive less happiness from the season.

Managing stress is unique to each individual, but there is one common denominator we all share — the power of the mind. It's *more* than a holistic health concept: hard science has determined that the placebo effect is so mighty that up to 75% of patients can feel results from an imitation pill in clinical trials for depression.

During this holiday, transform your way of thinking! Use the list below to help brighten your thoughts and behavior:

- 💡 Find creative ways to keep your blessings in mind – **make a pact to trade affirmations and jokes** by email or text message with a friend or post positive notes in prominent places.
- 💡 **Leave the sad novels and movies till later:** surround yourself with uplifting media and people – visit cuteoverload.com or 1000awesomethings.com.
- 💡 **Convert social gatherings into stress-reducing physical activity** by hosting friendly sports games, dance-offs or neighborhood cleanups.
- 💡 **Go green!** Researchers have found that families enjoy holidays much more when limiting environmentally-unfriendly practices. Candlelight and charitable giving produce little waste and lots of inner warmth!
- 💡 **Decide on at least three shining moments** in your life when you were proud of yourself and enthusiastic about the future. Reflect on them when feeling tense. Remember the sights, sounds, and smells; breathe deeply and send all of the apprehensions into the atmosphere as you exhale.
- 💡 **Imagine all of your internal insults are coming from the most ridiculous third-grade bully** you can dream up – and make an actual laughable portrait to carry with you.
- 💡 **Some folks even carry paperclips** in their pocket to link up every time a self-defeating statement pops in their heads. Assembling an actual chain of negativity throughout the day may remind you of how often we need to be kinder to ourselves and others.

Veteran resolution-breaker Gretchen Rubin of The Happiness Project decided last year that instead of pressuring herself to be without flaws in 2009 that she'd only do the things that made her happy. Visit happinessprojecttoolbox.com to start your own project, or create one as a group!

You are the boss of you, so take pleasure in life and limit the power of stress -- allowing you to savor the true meaning of the holidays: peace, love, and abounding joy.

**Make a choice for better health.
Visit spiritofwomen.com.**

Sources:
Mayo Clinic
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Social Indicators Research Journal
American Heart Association
Newsweek

"Every piece of the universe, even the tiniest little snow crystal, matters somehow. I have a place in the pattern, and so do you..."

– T.A. Barron

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