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Live Well, Work Well

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Prioritizing Your Emotional Well-being During the Holidays

While the holiday season and end-of-year festivities can be fun, they can also be stressful and take a toll on your emotional well-being. Putting your emotional wellness on the backburner may cause mood changes and feelings of irritability, hopelessness and isolation.



Consider the following tips to help prioritize your emotional well-being during the holiday season:

- **Practice healthy habits.** Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and eating a balanced diet will help ensure you have enough physical and mental energy to tackle responsibilities and challenges.
- **Stick to a routine.** It's important to keep a daily schedule for both work and personal time. Checking items off your to-do list can also help you feel accomplished on a daily basis.
- **Decrease caffeine and alcohol use.** Although alcohol and caffeine often appear at celebrations, these substances can

provoke feelings of depression, anxiety or other mental health challenges.

- **Maintain your boundaries.** Your calendar may quickly fill up with work, personal and social events. Get comfortable saying “no” and reducing extra activities or tasks so you aren't overloaded.
- **Incorporate positive activities.** Get into the habit of taking care of yourself and doing activities that make you happy. During a fast-paced month, it's vital to slow down and prioritize self-care.
- **Recognize your holiday stress triggers and relievers.** Financial pressures and personal demands are common triggers. Stress may cause you to lean on harmful stress relievers and fall into unhealthy habits like smoking or drinking. Becoming aware of your triggers and unhealthy coping mechanisms allows you to prepare healthy strategies to reduce stress.

It's essential to stay in tune with your feelings and care for yourself. If you have concerns about your emotional well-being, contact a mental health professional or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline at 800-662-HELP (4357).

Giving Your Favorite Recipes a Healthy Makeover

Food is part of holiday traditions, and your family may look forward to certain recipes. Luckily, there are some ways to make your favorite recipes a bit healthier. Consider these ways to transform your holiday recipes:

- **Fat**—When baking, use half the butter or oil and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or Greek yogurt.
- **Salt**—Gradually cut back the salt to see if you can taste the difference. You can reduce salt by half if baked goods don't require yeast.
- **Sugar**—Reduce the amount of sugar by one-third to one-half. Instead, add spices like cinnamon, cloves, allspice and nutmeg, or vanilla or almond extract to boost sweetness.

Healthy swaps can also increase the nutritional value of your classics. Get creative and experiment with other ways of creating healthy recipes for your most beloved holiday traditions.

Sugar Substitutes



Stevia—Swap out 1 cup of sugar for 1 teaspoon of stevia.



Honey—Add in a quarter of the amount of sugar listed.



Coconut sugar—Use an unrefined sugar cup for cup.

Poor Sleep in Your 40s Can Accelerate Brain Aging

Sleep is good for your overall health, and new research focuses on how it's important for brain health too. Researchers from the University of California San Francisco and other institutions found that sleep deprivation can make the brain age faster. The study revealed that people in their 40s with poor sleep quality have a brain age that's 1.6 to 2.6 years older by the time they're in their 50s, compared to those who consistently get quality sleep.

To combat this, focus on building healthy sleep habits. Try to fall asleep and wake up at the same time every day, aiming to get at least seven hours of sleep. Cultivate a quality sleep environment by keeping the room cool, dark and quiet and avoiding devices before bed. If you have concerns about your sleep habits, talk to a doctor.

Makes: 12 servings

Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup margarine (or butter or shortening)
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 ½ cups unsweetened applesauce
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup nuts (optional)

Preparations

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease the cookie sheet.
2. Cream together the sugar, margarine and egg.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the baking soda, flour, salt and cinnamon. Mix well.
4. Stir the flour mixture into the margarine mixture just until moist.
5. Add the applesauce, raisins and nuts (if using).
6. Drop dough by a heaping teaspoon several inches apart on a greased baking sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total calories	282
Total fat	8 g
Protein	4 g
Sodium	377 mg
Carbohydrate	50 g
Dietary fiber	2 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	27 g

Source: MyPlate