



# *A Season of Gratitude*

for a Wellness Journey during the Holidays!

## *WellU @HT Weekly Wellness Newsletter (Volume 7, Issue 2)*

### **Our Last Weekly Wellness Newsletter of the Semester!**

Dear Campus Community,

We have reached the end of our fall semester; we now prepare for a well-deserved break. As the holiday season approaches, it's easy to get caught up with travel plans, family events and christmas shopping, often putting our health and wellness on the back burner. As such, for our last wellness newsletter, we are share strategies to help you stay well during the holidays.

From managing stress to making mindful choices, our tips are designed to keep you feeling your best while still enjoying all that the holiday season has to offer. Let's embrace this joyful time with energy, clarity, and a little extra self-care, because your health matters, now and always!

The WellU RAM Wellness Program Team

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## *It's the Most Wonderful Time... to Stay Active!*

### **Tips to Stay Physically Active During the Holidays**

It is that time of the year! The holiday season is a time of joy, reflection, and celebration; but it can also be a challenge to maintain healthy habits when juggling family gatherings, travel plans, and seasonal festivities. Keeping it real, it's easy to let physical activity slip down the priority list.

However, staying active during the holidays is not only crucial for maintaining physical health, but also for managing stress, boosting mood, and staying energized – helping you combat some of the stress that often accompanies the end of the year.

Here are some simple tips to keep moving through the holidays:



**#1. Schedule Your Workouts Just Like You Schedule Meetings.** The holidays can be busy, but don't let that be an excuse to skip your workouts. Put your exercise sessions on the calendar just like any other important event. Whether it's a morning walk or a quick home workout, blocking out time makes it more likely that you'll stick to your routine. Scheduling it makes it more likely to happen.

**#2. Set Realistic and Flexible Goals.** The holidays are a busy time, so it's important to set realistic and flexible activity goals. Rather than aiming for a rigid workout schedule, focus on smaller, more achievable goals. Even 10-15 minutes of movement a day can make a big difference in how you feel. Try committing to staying active at least three times a week and adjust based on how your schedule evolves.

**#3. Use the Family Time.** The holidays are a time to connect with loved ones. Why not combine quality time with physical activity? Plan a family walk, play a game, or even create a holiday scavenger hunt. These activities are a great way to bond with family and friends while staying active and enjoying the holiday cheer.

**#4. Mix in Short Workouts.** You don't have to spend hours at the gym to stay active. Try short, high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts that only take 20-30 minutes but are highly effective. A quick at-home workout can fit easily into your day and leave you feeling energized. If time is limited, be active during commercial breaks while watching your favorite TV shows. Just get up, stand up and move!

**#5. Take the Stairs.** While you're out and about holiday shopping, choose to take the stairs whenever possible. It's a simple way to sneak in some extra steps and add to your daily activity. This small change can add up to big health benefits over time.

**#6. Get Moving After Big Meals.** After indulging in a big holiday feast, a light walk is a great way to help with digestion and burn off some of those calories. Plus, it will leave you feeling refreshed and less likely to overindulge again later.

**#7. Set Activity Challenges.** Make staying active a fun challenge! You could challenge yourself to hit a certain step count each day or to try a new type of exercise like yoga or a dance class. Share your progress with friends or family to keep the motivation going.

**#8. Find an Accountability Buddy.** Having an accountability partner can make staying active during the holidays more fun and motivating. Team up with a colleague or friend to check in on each other's fitness goals, schedule workout sessions together, or even engage in friendly fitness challenges. Support and encouragement can keep you both on track during the season.

**#9. Do an "Active" Holiday Tradition.** Whether it's taking a walk after a holiday meal or organizing a friendly game of volleyball or kickball, make staying active a part of your holiday tradition. These activities can be a great way to spend quality time with family while keeping your body moving.

**#10. Use Technology to Stay on Track.** There are countless fitness apps and devices that can help you stay motivated and on track during the holidays. Consider using a step tracker or fitness app to set daily activity goals or even join a virtual fitness class. Having a tool to track your progress can help you stay consistent and remind you to get moving.

## 12 Days of Christmas HIIT Workout

### *Managing Mental Health in the Holidays*

The holiday season, while festive, can bring about a range of mental health challenges. Research shows that many people experience financial strain, loneliness, and stress during this time, with 40% of individuals with existing mental health conditions saying the holidays make things worse. Various factors contribute to these struggles, including loneliness, high expectations, grief, financial pressures, and seasonal affective disorder. To that end, Autumn Walker, in her article title 'Unwrapping wellness: Managing holidays and mental health' (2023), shares the following tips to protect your mental wellness during the holidays:

The Lyra logo is displayed in a dark blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'y' is lowercase and has a long tail that curves downwards and to the right. The letters 'l', 'r', and 'a' are uppercase. The logo is positioned to the right of the main text block.

- **Practice emotional acceptance** by acknowledging and validating your feelings without judgment.
- **Surround yourself with supportive people** to combat feelings of isolation.
- **Start new traditions** to avoid being overwhelmed by past expectations.
- **Set boundaries** to manage time, energy, and finances.
- **Make choices based on your values** rather than trying to meet others' expectations.
- **Set realistic expectations** to avoid overcommitting and feeling burnt out.
- **Give yourself grace** and let go of perfectionism.
- **Use consequential thinking** to make decisions that are in your best interest.
- **Practice self-care** by engaging in activities that promote well-being and avoiding harmful coping mechanisms.
- **Seek professional help** if needed, as therapy or counseling can provide valuable support.

Remember, it is okay to not have everything perfect. Prioritize kindness, patience, and understanding with yourself to navigate the holidays with resilience.

Reference: Walker, A. (2023). Unwrapping wellness: Managing holidays and mental health. Lyra Health, Inc. Retrieved from <https://www.lyrahealth.com/blog/holidays-and-mental-health/>

# 10 Tips From Therapists to Finish the Year Strong

## *A Mindful Holiday Season*

Here are five quick daily tips for mindfulness activities that can help improve your mental health during the holidays:

**Mindful Breathing:** Take a few moments each day to focus on your breath. Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and bring your attention to the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body. Notice the inhale and exhale, the rise and fall of your belly or chest. Whenever your mind starts to wander, gently bring it back to the breath. This simple practice can help bring a sense of calm and relaxation, reducing stress and promoting mental clarity.

**Body Scan Meditation:** Set aside some time to do a body scan meditation. Start by paying attention to your toes and gradually work your way up through each part of your body, noticing any sensations or areas of tension. With each breath, imagine releasing any stress or discomfort you may be holding in those areas. This practice can help you become more aware of your body and provide a sense of relaxation and grounding.

**Mindful Walking:** Engage in mindful walking by taking a slow and deliberate stroll, paying attention to each step you take. Notice the sensations in your feet as they touch the ground, the movement of your legs, and the shifting of your body weight. Be fully present in the act of walking, allowing yourself to observe the environment around you with curiosity and without judgment. This practice can help bring your focus to the present moment and promote a sense of grounding and connection with your surroundings.

**Gratitude Practice:** Cultivate gratitude by taking a few minutes each day to reflect on things you are grateful for. It could be as simple as appreciating a beautiful sunrise, a supportive friend, or a good meal. Write down or mentally acknowledge these moments of gratitude, savoring the positive experiences in your life. This practice can shift your focus from negativity to positivity, enhancing your overall well-being and fostering a more optimistic outlook.

**Desk Yoga or Stretching:** Incorporate gentle yoga stretches or simple stretching exercises at your desk. Take a few minutes to stretch your neck, shoulders, arms, and legs. Pay attention to the sensations in your body as you stretch and move. This can help relieve physical tension, promote circulation, and provide a mental break from work tasks, allowing you to return to your work with renewed energy and clarity.

Remember, consistency is key when it comes to mindfulness activities. Even dedicating a few minutes each day to these practices can have a positive impact on your mental health over time.



## Financial Tips for a Stress-Free Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time of joy and celebration that help us get connected with our loved ones, but it can also bring financial stress. With a little planning and discipline, you can enjoy this season without breaking the bank. Here are some practical tips to help you manage your finances during the holidays.



### Tip 1: Set realistic expectations.

Give your kids a realistic view of what they can expect for gifts. We often want to please everybody as gifts are a sensitive topic for some people. However, attempting to please everybody may have harsh financial implications. To avoid being caught in an endless financial spiral, set the rules upfront and make a compromise if needed. For instance, consider a gift exchange if you have a large family or negotiate a gift truce among adults. Last, there is no need to spend money on expensive gifts. After all, research has shown it is the thought that counts for gift giving (Givi, Galak & Olivola, 2021). Therefore, focus on meaningful gestures, such as homemade gifts, which can be more cost-effective.

### Tip 2: Have a budget and a plan.

Having a budget is critical to have a line of sight of much you can afford to spend without dipping into savings or getting into debt. A variety of budgeting apps like Mint or YNAB can help you track your expenses and stay on top of your spending. Using a shopping list can also help save money as research has found consumers who use a shopping list purchase significantly fewer items and spend less money (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020). In addition, if planning to travel during the holidays, it is imperative to plan in advance. Book flights early, travel mid-week, and consider alternate airports to cut costs. Websites like Skyscanner, Expedia and Google Flights allow you to compare fares and find the best deals. Last, remember to use travel rewards points or miles for flights and accommodations to further reduce expenses.

### Tip 3: Make an efficient use of your money.

To make your money last, look for great deals. There are plenty of opportunities to find great opportunities to save, such as Black Friday, Cyber Monday and holiday sales. In addition, the availability of price comparison online tools allows you to shop strategically before making the final purchase. More importantly, sites like Honey, Groupon or Rakuten give you access to discounts and cash back offers. Using free rewards, points and cash back can also help to keep your spending under control in the long run.

### Tip 4: Finish the year strong.

I often recommend my clients to clean their closets and cabinets to collect old clothes, utensils, and appliances for charity donations before the end of the year. If you do so, please remember to

get your donation receipt for tax purposes. I also recommend checking their credit at least once a year to ensure there is no inaccurate or incomplete information. Since everybody is entitled to an annual free credit report, requesting one before the end of the year may be a good move. Likewise, meeting with a financial advisor and accountant to make a quick assessment of their financial position may be a smart thing. This meeting should help identify what investments may need to be divested before the end of the year to claim potential tax losses. In addition, get a checklist to ensure documents can be gathered in anticipation for tax return preparation.

**Tip 5: Have fun and get ready to plan for next year!**

The holiday season is a time to enjoy with family and loved ones. As a result, putting a focus on experiences instead of material things may result in a better outcome. Research has shown spending money on experiences and activities generally leads to longer-lasting pleasure and happiness compared to acquiring material possessions (Boven & Thomas, 2003). Therefore, consider offering your time or skills, such as cooking a special meal or organizing a family event. This approach not only saves money but also fosters deeper connections.

As the end of the year comes closer, remember to reflect on what went right and what went wrong. Find out the right balance on your spending habits, make sure to set up an emergency fund, and make a commitment to live within your means.

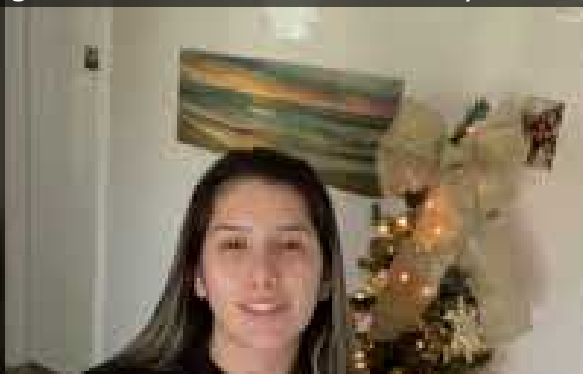
In conclusion, the holiday season may represent a stressful time that may put at risk anybody's financial affairs. By planning, budgeting, prioritizing, and finding creative ways to save, people can focus on what really matters, which is to have quality time with their loved one. Start implementing these tips to ensure a joyful holiday season and financially stress-free.

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## Financial Wellness Before the Holidays

### *Paula's Corner*

WellU RAM Wellness Program: Paula's Corner Holiday Season 2024





## 12-Day Wellness Challenge

Join us for a fun and simple 12-day wellness challenge! Below, you'll find a video with easy-to-follow exercises and activities that will help you feel more energized and focused. Each day brings a new, simple task to keep you moving and motivated. You'll also find a short description of each day's activity below to help guide you. Take it at your own pace and remember, small steps lead to big changes!

### 🌲 Day 1: 1-Minute Plank

Day 1 is all about building core strength with a 1-minute plank. It's simple but super effective for strengthening your abs, shoulders, and back. Hold steady and focus on keeping your body straight and tight.

### 🌲 Day 2: 2 Sets of 30-Second Wall Squats

Day 2 is leg day! Find a wall and slide down into a squat position. Repeat for 2 sets. Keep your thighs parallel to the ground and hold for 30 seconds. Remember to engage your core and keep your knees directly above your ankles.

### 🌲 Day 3: 3 Push-Ups

Day 3 is for upper-body strength. Do 3 push-ups, focusing on form and controlled movement. Whether you do them on your knees or your toes, push-ups are a great way to tone your arms and chest.

### 🌲 Day 4: Write Down 4 Things You're Grateful For

On Day 4, we're focusing on gratitude. Write down 4 things you're grateful for. It's a great way to shift your mindset and bring more positivity into your life.

### 🌲 Day 5: 5 Burpees

Day 5 is a challenge! Do 5 burpees, starting standing, jumping into a plank, and jumping back up. These will get your heart pumping, work your entire body, and give you a great burst of energy.

### 🌲 Day 6: 6 Lunges Per Leg


On Day 6, we're doing 6 lunges per leg. Lunges are fantastic for your legs and glutes, and they'll help you stay strong and balanced.

### 🌲 Day 7: 7 Jumping Jacks

Day 7 is a quick cardio boost. Do 7 jumping jacks. They'll get your blood flowing and help increase your energy for the rest of the day.

### 🌲 Day 8: 8 Minutes of Meditation

On Day 8, take 8 minutes to sit quietly and meditate. Find a quiet spot, focus on your breath, and let your mind clear. It's a perfect way to relax and recharge.



### 🌲 Day 9: Share 9 Compliments or Kind Words

Day 9 is all about spreading positivity. Share 9 compliments or kind words with those around you. It's an easy way to brighten someone's day and spread holiday cheer.

### 🌲 Day 10: 10-Minute Walk

Day 10 is a great way to clear your mind. Go for a 10-minute walk while reflecting on your goals for the new year. Use this time to reset and get ready for the year ahead.

### 🌲 Day 11: 11 High Knees Per Leg

On Day 11, let's get moving with 11 high knees per leg. This exercise will get your heart rate up and help build endurance while keeping things fun.

### 🌲 Day 12: 12 Minutes of Stretching or Yoga

Finish the challenge with 12 minutes of stretching or yoga. It's the perfect way to unwind, stretch out, and reflect on all the progress you have made.



**Carlos Cervantes**

Carlos is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

