



# Families Matter



## Holiday Stress Relief

Worries about work, money, health care and staying safe in the COVID-pandemic — as well as broader issues like discrimination and climate change — can pile on the stress.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, try these ways to notch down your stress yourself. Also ask for help or a referral from your health care team on ways to lower your stress.

### Why It Matters

Simply put, stress can kill. People with high levels of chronic stress or psychological distress are more likely to die of various causes, research shows, including of heart disease and stroke.

Chronic stress is also linked to anxiety disorders and major depression. And stress can underlie other problems, such as irritability, sleep disruption, headaches, changes in appetite and gut discomfort.

### Fight stress by focusing on your physical and mental health.

- **Get out of the house:** Take a walk in nature and enjoy the sights and sounds.
- **Sleep tight:** Set a regular bedtime and wakeup routine and turn off or dim electronic screens as bedtime approaches.
- **Use your network:** Reach out and connect regularly with family and friends.
- **Put your mind to it:** Explore mindfulness, a type of meditation that focuses your attention on your present experiences without interpretation or judgment.
- **Lean on a furry friend:** Pets may help reduce physiological reactions to stress.
- **Work it out:** Regular physical activity can relieve tension, anxiety and depression and give you an immediate exercise "high."

### One Minute Stress Relief

**The eye easer.** Close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows, near the bridge of your nose. Slowly increase pressure for five seconds, then gently release. Repeat 2 – 3 times.

### The shoulder saver.

Place your left hand on the right side of your neck by your shoulder. Press fingers firmly into the muscle while tucking your chin in toward your chest. Exhale and hold for 10 seconds, release, then repeat on the left side.

**The palm pleaser.** Lace your fingers together, leaving thumbs free. Slowly knead your left thumb into the palm of your right hand for 20 – 30 seconds. Then repeat on your left hand.

Source: [heart.org/bewell](http://heart.org/bewell)



## Oklahoma State University

Volume 18, Issue 1

November 2021

Contact the Extension Office at 273-7683 or [sonya.mcdaniel@okstate.edu](mailto:sonya.mcdaniel@okstate.edu)



POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY EXTENSION

### Inside this issue:

Holiday Bulge	2
Parent Tips—Holiday Meal	2
Gratitude/Attitude	2
Holiday Spending	3
Organization	3
November Activity	4
Quick Fix Recipes	4

# Beating the Holiday Bulge

It may seem that maintaining a healthy diet between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve is an impossible task, however, there are a few tips to help you enjoy the "special" foods we love and not gain those extra pounds. The secret is moderation and balance.

## Eat small, lower calorie meals during the day.

- Eat a healthy snack just before you attend a holiday party or meal. This is especially true for young children.

- Greet people before you make your way to the food table.
- Make a 1 trip rule.
- Choose only foods you really want instead of getting one of everything.
- Keep portions small.
- Skip or just taste fried or high fat foods. Only 1-2 pieces of cheese!
- Barely dip fresh produce in dips or spreads.
- Choose 2 appetizers instead of 1 entrée so you have verity.

## Parent Tips for those Holiday Family Events and Dinners

Parents need to plan ahead to limit overstimulation on children. Holidays often play havoc with children's daily routines and diets—but it doesn't have to be that way. With a little planning, you can minimize the upset.

1. **Evaluate length and quality.** Limit how long your child must behave. If a whole-day affair is simply too much, plan to arrive just before dinner and leave early. If you are in the habit of hosting, consider taking a year off. Hosting a holiday meal at one's house causes upheaval for a minimum of two days with all the preparations and entertaining. If attending dinner at another family home isn't possible, consider planning a "Just us" Thanksgiving dinner. You may find it much more restful and restorative.
2. **Take two cars, if possible.** This way the in-law parent is free to take home an over-stimulated child, if necessary, and the other parent can stay and finish the holiday with his/her family.
3. **Consider food.** Holidays mean normal mealtimes get changed. Children can get overly hungry and when that happens, their behavior deteriorates. In addition, Thanksgiving dinner often includes rich foods children are unaccustomed to eating; many refuse unfamiliar foods and fill up on sugary treats. You can avoid problems by making sure your child has a healthy meal before you leave for Grandma's house. Another strategy is to bring appetizers yourself (so they arrive on time) and make them kid-friendly and healthy.
4. **Keep bedtimes and naptimes regular in the days preceding the holiday.** If your child is well-rested, your chances of good behavior are better.

## Convert Attitude into Action

A small gesture, such as a smile, can lighten the day of the waitress who hands your youngster a glass of milk. A hug for your child's teacher is another attitude action. When she empties the dishwasher, remind your child that this is her action of appreciation for home and food even if she doesn't think so at the time. Thankfulness can also be expressed through homemade goodies. Little acts of kindness are the best way to put gratitude into action.

## Practice Gratitude Permanently

Showing thanks and appreciation does not end with the season. Help your child write thank you notes for her Christmas gifts. Preschoolers can dictate their gratitude as you write, or they can draw a picture of appreciation to give to their gift-giver. Also, find opportunities during the upcoming year to

*Give kids the rules and options before entering an event or house!*



# Holiday Spending

1. Make a list now (and check it twice!) You can't guess how much you'll spend until you make a list of everyone you buy for.
2. Determine what you'll spend. This may be tough, but think about each person on your list and set a spending goal. Successful planning begins with determining a final total for all your gifts. Make sure that your numbers are realistic and achievable.
3. Budget is the name of the game. Ideally, planning should begin at the first of the year. Take the grand total, dividing it by 12 and depositing that amount in your bank account each month. You would be very prepared come holiday shopping time. But, it's not too late to start your holiday budget now: Just divide your gift total by the number of months left until shopping time and save that amount each month.
4. Keep funds separate. It's not a great plan to mingle your every day money and your gift savings.
5. Shop ahead. One of the best ways to keep your budget in line is to shop for your gifts throughout the year.

Source: [www.duquoin.com/lifestyle/family/](http://www.duquoin.com/lifestyle/family/)



# Everyday Organizing Tips

## **Constantly picking up family members' belongings—**

Create a Clutter Jail. When family members leave their “stuff” in clutter-free zones, put the items in a box or plastic bin you’ve designated the Clutter Jail. The culprits must post bail (doing chores, losing allowance or TV/Internet time, or paying \$1) before they get back their belongings.

## **Create an Out the Door Center—**

Near the door, place a tub, basket or shelf to keep all items needed as family members head out the door in the morning. Examples: purse, backpacks, school papers, etc.

**Sorting laundry—** Buy white, light-colored and dark baskets at the \$\$ store. Stick them in your closets. When a basket is full, do that load—no sorting needed.

Clutter in your home is an energy “zapper”, deal with it before the hustle and bustle “zaps” you too!

### **To put this rule into practice make three piles.**

**Pile #1:** Deal with it, is for anything that needs to be acted on immediately (bills to be paid, messages to be returned)

**Pile #2:** Is for things not as urgent but needs to be saved, such as bank statements, receipts, etc. Label the sections in this pile by subject, month and category – whatever works best for you.

**Pile #3:** Pitch it, is for things to be thrown away. Once the clutter is gone, the cleaning can begin.

**Hooks are better than surfaces for keeping things clutter free!**

**Not as easy to drop things off and only so much fits on a hook!!**

The Families Matter E-newsletter is one way the Pottawatomie County Cooperative Extension Service, Family & Consumer Science programs provides educational resources in our community.

Families Matter E-news  
Is published by the following:  
Sonya McDaniel  
Family & Consumer Science  
Extension Educator

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions.



POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY  
EXTENSION

**Shuffle Bag:** Make a large open space in a room. On one side of the space put a line of masking tape on the floor. In the center of the space, make "X's" with colored tape. Have your children stand behind the tape line and try to slide beanbags onto the colorful "X's".

**Penny on the Shoe:** Divide your children into 2 groups and have them line up on opposite sides of the room facing each other. Give a penny to the first child in one of the lines. Ask the child to carry the penny on his or her shoe to the child standing directly across the room without dropping the penny. Then have that child carry the penny on his or her shoe across the room to the next child in line.

**Indoor Basketball:** Use masking tape to make a line on the floor. Place 2-3 empty trash cans 3-5 feet from the line. Let your children stand behind the line and take turns tossing beanbags into the cans. Good idea to place the trash cans in front of a wall with nothing breakable on either side!!

Don't forget to continue exercise  
during the  
Holidays and Winter Months!  
Running around the house or  
10 minute dance  
parties work great to release energy!

## Pumpkin Pie Popcorn!

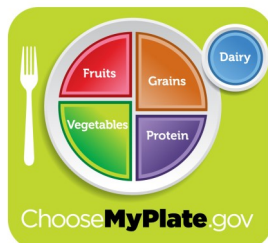
1 bag low-fat microwave popcorn  
1/4 cup granulated sugar  
1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice  
1 cup California Raisins  
1 (5-ounce) package glazed pecans  
Butter-flavored non-stick cooking spray

1. Microwave popcorn according to package directions and empty into a large bowl. Remove all unpopped kernels.
  2. Stir sugar and pumpkin pie spice together in a small bowl.
  3. Spray popcorn liberally with cooking spray and toss to coat evenly. Add raisins and pecans.
  4. Sprinkle with sugar and spice mixture and toss until popcorn is well coated.
- Makes 12 (1-cup) servings.

## Quick Fix Recipes—

### Oven-Fried Sweet Potatoes

Scrub a sweet potato and cut it into thin slices. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and place the potato slices on it. Bake at 450 degrees for 10-12 minutes, or until the sweet potato slices are crisp and lightly brown. Cool and eat!



### Kiddie Salad Bar at Home— Helping Kids eat better

Set out small bowls of broccoli, shredded carrots, diced cucumbers, raisins, and more for kids to create their own masterpiece. When kids are able to select their own variety they are more likely to eat more. Keeping these items in containers with lids helps you store them in the refrigerator to use throughout the week. Items can be cooked or raw!