

## Less Stress and More Holiday Cheer

*Rona Renner, RN*

Many people find that their stress level rises during the holiday season as they work hard to make enough money, prepare for family traditions, and provide their children with fun activities. With the USA in an economic crisis, people are feeling pressure to shop less and reconsider to whom to buy presents. As people attempt to balance their budget, many are deciding to stay home instead of visiting relatives who live far away. These are hard choices, but rather than let stress get you down, focus on what you can do to bring joy and good cheer into your life and the lives of people you love.

### Reduce Your Stress:

- If you're doing too much, have a family meeting to decide what's most important. Take time to hear each other's point of view.
- Get enough sleep, and find time to relax, even when you're busy. Play music, read a book, talk with a friend.
- Exercise, eat well, and don't skip meals.
- Do your best to deal with stress in healthy ways rather than drinking too much, smoking, doing drugs, or overeating. These ways of coping have negative consequences.
- When upset, take some deep breaths before you respond to your children. If you're about to yell, excuse yourself till you calm down. Provide discipline with respect.
- Point out the things you like about the people in your family as often as possible.

### Reflect On Your Values:

As you enjoy the holiday season, ask yourself if you're teaching your children the values you think are important to live a responsible and meaningful life.

It's a challenge to teach children that they can't always have everything they want, or what their friends have. There are many influences that connect the holidays with consumerism, so it's up to you to offer a more meaningful point of view.

- Spend time in nature, and help your children express their creativity by making simple gifts for others.
- Turn off the TV and play games together. The gift of time is the greatest gift you can give children, and having fun and laughing is good for your heart and your health.
- Make a plan of how you will give to others during the holidays. Perhaps you'll serve food at a homeless shelter, or bake cookies for an elderly neighbor.
- Teach by example, be respectful, and point out the good in people. Being cheerful can be contagious.
- Enjoy the time you spend with your family. A great gift you can give them is a home with harmony, love, and the smell of healthy food cooking on the stove.

This holiday season count your blessings, connect with your community, and spend time with your children or other people you love.

