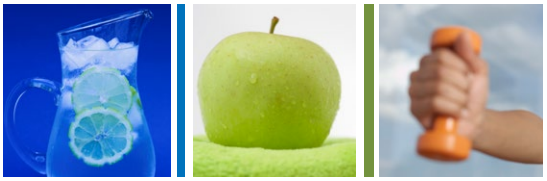
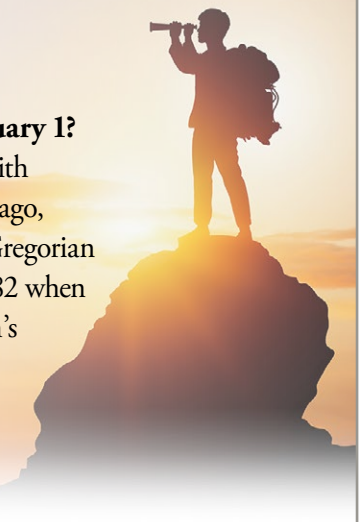
City of Seattle

TAKE CHARGE!

December 2022



Looking Forward in 2023 — and Beyond



Do you know why we ring in the New Year on January 1? It's an old story. Most historians credit Julius Caesar with developing the Julian calendar more than 2,000 years ago, designating January 1 as the start of a new year. The Gregorian calendar, which many nations use today, started in 1582 when Pope Gregory XIII aligned the calendar with the earth's rotation around the sun — marking 365 days.

The new year has taken on a lot of meaning since then. And a good thing about entering a new year each January? It offers us new perspectives and options for living, working and enjoying life.

What are you most hoping for in the New Year? Will it begin with a hangover or hope and gratitude for greeting a new year filled with promise? Or somewhere in between?

At least 50% of us make resolutions for each new year, and the most popular personal goals: resolving to lose weight, eat healthier and exercise more. To get started, identify the personal activities that you hope to explore to achieve better health, well-being and pleasure. For example:

- Create a comfortable start-of-day routine.
- Walk regularly with your kids or a friend.
- Unplug from screen time more often to relax.
- Learn how to meditate to promote tranquility.
- Plan for pleasant activities in your new year.

Take action: It's common for New Year's resolutions to fade away in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Revisit your health goals frequently.

"Every day brings new choices." – Martha Beck

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, Volunteering? Good for You!, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V12tools.

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date pandemic information visit **coronavirus.gov**.

city events

It's the holiday time already?
Thursday, December 1
11:30 am – 12:30 pm
Register here

Handling Financial Stress
Wednesday, December 7
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Register here

Mindfulness
Monday, December 12
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Register here

Deferred Compensation Webinars

Enrolling and Contributing
Wednesday, December 7
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
Register here
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Register here

Thursday, December 8
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
Register here

End-of-Year Check-In
Wednesday, December 14
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
Register here
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Register here

Thursday, December 15
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
Register here

Peer Support *Webinars*

Caregivers & Resilience - Peer Support
Tuesday, December 6
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Register here

Women and Resilience
Thursday, December 8
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Register here

Young Adults and Resilience
Tuesday, December 13
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Register here

The Jolly (or Not) Holidays

Many folks find their mental health takes a nose dive during the wintry holidays. With extra demands on your time and energy, the added effort can bring on added fatigue — enough to deflate your spirits.

Feeling down during the holidays is a common syndrome, and you're likely to have plenty of company in this regard. The American Psychological Association recently reported that 38% of people said their stress increased during the holidays, and only 8% of people said they felt happier.

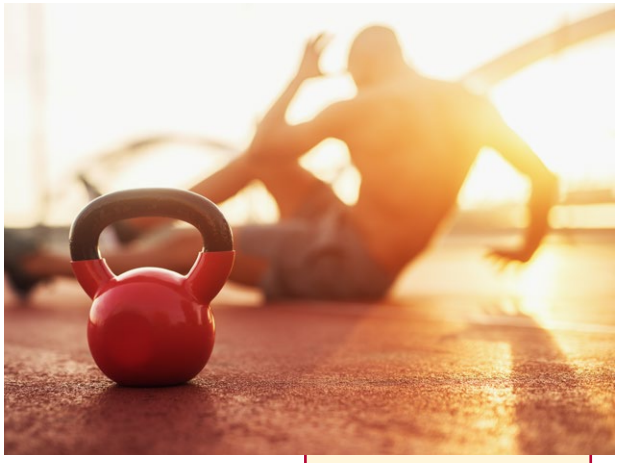
Can you identify with these reasons for feeling blue at holiday time?

- **Recent loss of a loved one** may leave you feeling socially isolated. However, withdrawing can often worsen loneliness and depression.
- **Added anxiety during the holiday months** may cause even those who are generally content to experience loneliness.
- **Less daylight in winter** can contribute to seasonal affective disorder, a form of depression triggered by the change of seasons and reduced daylight.

Exercising your body can help offset the blues. Include some form of daily physical activity — as simple as taking a daily walk outdoors, building a snow fort with your children or meeting friends for a day of cross-country skiing. Or try swimming indoors regularly to boost your mood and energy despite the chilly climate.

Timing Your Exercise

When it comes to exercise, what time you're active can help make it routine. Your personal lifestyle and workout goals may influence when you exercise. If you're a beginner, read on for tips on getting started.



"Any time that you feel motivated and energized enough to exercise is the best time for you," says Dr. Beth Frates, clinical assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School.

Many people find routine exercise works best in the mornings when it's less likely to get bumped by other demands of the day. Another potential benefit for morning exercisers is boosting the feel-good brain chemicals, dopamine and serotonin, that are released during physical activity.

"That sets you up for success throughout the whole day and may increase your concentration and creativity," says Dr. Frates.

Other regular exercisers who may not be morning people find a workout at the end of their work day especially energizing for evenings ahead. Plus, as the day progresses, your muscles and joints may become more limber for a more effective workout.

And then there are folks who fit in exercise whenever possible. Varying your exercise time can have advantages, especially if you can choose periods when your energy level is robust. Or if you tend to experience midafternoon slumps, try doing short bursts of exercise to re-energize.

Added benefits of routine vigorous exercise over time:

- Sound sleep.
- Better brain health.
- Weight control.
- Stronger bones and muscles.

Make your workouts work better:

1. Wait at least three hours after a large meal before your exercise regimen.
2. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid vigorous activity (running, fast dancing, high-intensity interval training or HIIT) one hour before bedtime. Regular exercise of adequate intensity can promote muscle relaxation and deeper sleep.
3. Before a vigorous workout, a carbohydrate-rich snack (e.g., a banana or slice of whole-grain bread) can provide quick fuel for short, high-intensity exercise.
4. You're trying to lose or maintain your weight, but you're craving a treat on the job. Skip the calories and take a short break for a burst of energy; try a fast walk or lifting weights.
5. If you're just beginning routine exercise, you may find it easier to break workouts into shorter periods. Even seven or eight minutes at a time count toward your goal of 150 minutes per week.
6. Before a strength training workout, consider warming up with brisk walking or another aerobic activity for five or 10 minutes. Cold muscles are more prone to injury than are warm muscles.
7. Try a pedometer. It's an easy, inexpensive way to get motivated. A mile walk is approximately 2,000 steps; 10,000 steps are nearly five miles. **Note:** The number of steps and distance vary among individuals. The most important thing is to just **walk**.

Regular exercise can also lower your risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several kinds of cancer.

Melatonin supplements, used as sleep aids, can sicken and even kill children. Melatonin, a hormone which plays a role in sleep, is widely available in over-the-counter sleep medications, including child-attracting gummies. But melatonin can be deadly for children, especially those ages five and younger. Children's Hospital of Michigan researchers found more than 260,000 American youngsters were poisoned by melatonin during the previous decade. Thousands were hospitalized and some died. Keep melatonin — and other supplements, as well as all prescription and over-the-counter medications — securely locked up out of the reach of children.

TIP of the MONTH

Nutrition in a Small Package

Do you enjoy almonds, walnuts and pecans? Eating nuts in small quantities is a heart-healthy habit, but some people are worried that these high-calorie morsels may promote weight gain. **Not so.** A meta-analysis of multiple studies shows that nuts will not cause weight gain and may actually help with weight maintenance because they are nutrient-dense and satiating. Choose a 1- to 1.5-ounce serving per day from a variety of your favorite nuts.

Nutrition: Sleep on It

eating smart

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

It's well known that eating a balanced diet can help combat heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer. But did you know that the same nutritious diet can also help improve sleep?

Studies show that a Mediterranean-style diet — one that's filled with vegetables, fruit, beans, grains, fish and olive oil — can help improve sleep quality.

Overall, research shows diets that are high in protein, fiber-rich carbohydrates and healthier fats can help people wake less during the night, have deeper sleep, and take less time to fall asleep.

The carbs you choose make a big difference. High-fiber carbs, such as whole grains, vegetables and beans, are associated with deep sleep, while sugary carbs are tied to lighter sleep. A dietary pattern that's loaded with soft drinks, pastries and candy can actually reduce sleep quality. Studies show that people who sleep for a shorter duration also tend to eat more calories and consume more fatty foods in total than people who sleep longer.

Eating patterns that are plentiful in fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, and legumes contain more melatonin, which is a hormone that helps regulate our internal body clock and helps ensure better sleep.

Beverages can impact sleep, too, especially caffeinated beverages, such as coffee and tea, as well as energy drinks and some soft drinks. Too much caffeine can harm sleep, since it stimulates the central nervous system and boosts energy levels. Aim to have no more than 400 milligrams of caffeine (about four small cups of coffee) per day and consume it in the morning rather than close to bedtime, to minimize sleep disruption. And even moderate amounts of alcohol (two drinks) can decrease sleep quality by 24%.

EASY recipe

Pomegranate Apple Salad with Ginger Dressing

- 4 cups baby spinach
- 1 apple, thinly sliced
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds
- 1 cup frozen edamame beans, defrosted and prepared
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp freshly grated ginger
- ¼ tsp salt

Arrange the spinach on a large serving platter. **Sprinkle** with apple, pomegranate, edamame and feta cheese. **In** a small bowl, whisk olive oil, vinegar, mustard, ginger and salt until blended. **Drizzle** dressing over salad, toss and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 217 calories | 7g protein | 15g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 17g carbohydrate | 9g sugar | 5g fiber | 308mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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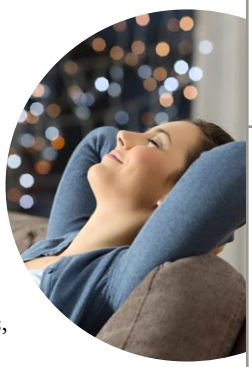
EXPERT advice — Eric Endlich, PhD

Q: How to cope with pressure to be perfect?



A: Pursuing perfection can be exhausting, not to mention impossible. If you are unable to accept your flaws or mistakes, try these strategies:

- **Zoom out.** Are you focused on what matters, or unimportant details? Is it a good use of your time to keep trying to make things perfect?
- **Let *good enough* be good enough.** Precision matters in few situations (e.g., brain surgery), but in many cases, doing things imperfectly won't hurt you.
- **Set your standards.** Before starting a project, decide what your specific requirements are for completion so that you won't keep raising the bar.
- **Let go of the past.** Blaming yourself for errors isn't helpful. Instead, notice what you did right, as well as what you've learned.

If you experience ongoing distress despite using self-help techniques, consider seeing a mental health professional.

News & Notes

- **Watch for New Aetna Medical Cards:** All employees on an Aetna plan will receive a new medical card by the end of December because of a group number change. You may continue to use your current ID card until you receive your new ID card. You can discard your old ID card and replace it with the new one upon receipt.
- **Use Your 2022 Health and Day Care Flexible Spending Account (FSA):** If you want to reduce your remaining Health FSA balance by December 31, 2022, see eligible expenses **here**. You may also search **FSAstore.com** for 100% FSA-Eligible products. If you want to use your remaining Daycare FSA balance, see eligible expenses **here**. Navia Benefits will carry over up to $550 of unused 2022 Health FSA balances at the end of January. There is no carry over provision for the Daycare FSA – either use it or lose it.
- **Get Help with Depression and Anxiety:** If you or a family member is living with depression, anxiety, addiction or any other mental health issue, help is available through your employee benefits. Call the number on the back of your medical card for assistance or contact Resources for Living Employee Assistance Program at 1-888-272-7252 or TTY 1-888-879-8274.
- **Schedule your dental visits ahead of time.** Preventive care is only $10 or free, depending on your plan. To take full advantage of the preventive care that comes with your dental benefits, schedule your appointments in advance. Dentists can often be booked out for months at a time. Scheduling your next visit at your current appointment is the easiest way to avoid missing regular checkups and cleanings. Don't have a preventive appointment scheduled? Call your dentist's office now or find a dental provider on your plan at **Delta Dental of Washington** or **Dental Health Services**.

Annual Safety Gift Guide

Give the gift of safety this year to show how much you care. Here are some ideas for innovative stocking stuffers and gifts:

Portable toothbrush sanitizing case: Taking a toothbrush while traveling is often scary when you think of the germs that the brush head might encounter. There are a variety of portable sanitizers out there designed to kill germs.

Portable water purifier: This is a great device for hikers or campers who need hydration in a hurry.

Wearable safety device: These include bracelets, fitness bands, necklaces, keychains and even scrunchies that can make calls or set off alarms.

Digital peephole viewer: In addition to doorbell viewers, there are LCD peephole viewers that can attach over existing peepholes. These devices let residents view their visitors on larger screens. Features can include wide-angle, zoom and low-light modes. Some even have image recording capabilities.

TV simulator: Many people use light timers when they are away from home; however, there are now LED TV simulator units that mimic the flickering light of a television.

Battery-powered air pump: These can come in handy for any traveler by bike or car because they don't require physical strength or electricity to operate.

Dryer vent pressure system sensor: Lint-clogged dryer vents can lead to fires. These pressure system sensors can alert you when a lint clog is inhibiting air movement.