

Health Bulletin

Cooperative Extension Service

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(Health Education through Extension Leadership) Staff



AFTER THE BALL IS OVER: Coming down from the holiday season

It is the time of year to breath easier. The big holidays are over and it is time to move on with the new year. For some, this is a difficult time. Others are eager to get back to “normal” and breathe a sigh of relief. For everyone it is an opportunity to view life from a fresh perspective, think about how things can be in this new year, and make decisions about how to proceed with a clear head and open heart. Here are some ideas that might help get a fresh start:

- Put away all the holiday trimmings. Box it up and store it away until next year.
 - For some people, having holiday decorations around after the holidays contributes to feelings of sadness, disappointment, and melancholy. If this is true for you, move quickly to pack up and store everything associated with the holiday. This activity also lessens clutter and helps with the inevitable transition of moving on. If you have a tendency to become depressed after the holidays, waiting to take down all the decorations will only add to these difficult feelings.
- Celebrate achievements and good times from last year. Even though there might have been some miserable times, you can surely find something to celebrate.
 - Focusing on negative experiences and feelings will contribute to depression. Let go of the sad stuff and focus on what is to come.
- Set some simple goals for the new year. Call these resolutions if you want. It doesn't really matter. What matters is that you see yourself heading somewhere positive. Thus, make sure you state your goals as something to work toward not something to work away from. For example, rather than saying, “I will loose 20 pounds in the next six months,” say, “I will take time to appreciate my health and celebrate the things my body can do.”
 - Loosing weight might be one of those things that occurs as a result of you thinking about your body in a different way. You might find that the weight loss is more likely to be maintained and that you begin to think more in terms of good health rather than weight loss.
- Plan at least one behavior or habit you want to form that will contribute to your physical and mental health. For example at the end of each day, express gratitude for one thing that happened during the day.
 - This sounds simplistic, but it works to help you gain a more positive perspective on your life and the world around you. That perspective goes a long way in promoting good physical and mental health.

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- Turn around one of your usual negative self-talks and make it positive. Most everyone experiences some negative self-talk. Examples of negative self-talk may include:
 - I hate the way I look.
 - I can not get done with all the work I have to do.
 - I am not a good parent.

Usually these are broad, generalized statements based on one or some events. Try turning them around to more realistic statements such as:

- I do not always take the time to make myself look the best I can, however, I know I can look pretty good if I really want to.
 - I do not always get all my work done, however, I do a good job with the work I do get done.
 - I did sort of lose it this morning when the kids wouldn't get out of bed on time, however, I was able to pull it together and get everyone moving toward their morning.
- Rid yourself of some clutter – both literally and figuratively.

Try straightening up one small area around the house or at work – put all your tools back in the tool box, clean off the dresser top, clean out the medicine cabinet and get rid of items that have expired dates, or select one drawer in the chest, dump it on the bed and re-organize it.

- These little activities begin to influence your mood and impact your overall well-being. These kinds of activities, repeated frequently, lighten the world a little and you even begin to feel a bit more control over your environment.

Another example might be forgiving someone that you think treated you unjustly. That's right, just simply forgive them. Let go of the old hurt and anger.

- This hurt and anger will cause you much more damage than the harm anyone else can create by treating you badly. Not only do they affect your mood, they also contribute to a host of physical problems – everything from heart disease to reducing the effectiveness of your body's immune

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