



Christmas Child

December:

- Loneliness
- Hand washing
- Healthy eating
- Priceless Gifts



Turn your eyes this Christmas
to the Child who was born
He came into the world
only to find sorrow and scorn

He knew we needed a Savior
to set us free from sin
No other way to redemption
but to open your heart to Him

Remember this Christmas season
material things cannot satisfy
They are but temporary
they disappear and die

But the love of our Savior
a gift that lives eternally
He is that brightest Star
that shines upon the tree.



Isaiah 41:10

'So do not fear, for I am
with you; do not be
dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and
help you; I will uphold you
with my righteous right
hand'

*In His Service,
H-3 Ministry*



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LONELINESS - TIPS TO PREVENT HOLIDAY STRESS AND DEPRESSION



When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
2. **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship.

If you're feeling stress during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat.

Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.

3. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as **sharing pictures, emails or videos**. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate together.
4. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.



5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Try these alternatives:

- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
 - Give homemade gifts.
 - Start a family gift exchange.
6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.
7. **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.
8. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Eat healthy meals. (see information)
- Get plenty of sleep; at least 8 hours of sleep
- Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
- Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga or chair yoga, youtube exercises as tolerated or dancing.
- Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.



9. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

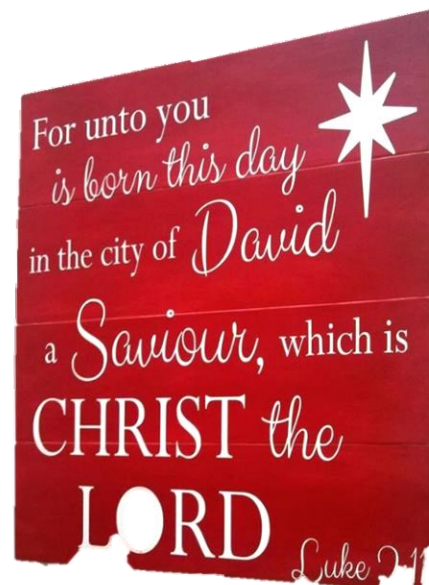
Some options may include:

- Taking a walk at night and stargazing
- Listening to soothing music
- Reading a book

10. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

TAKE CONTROL OF THE HOLIDAYS

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.





Handwashing at Home, at Play, and Out and About



Germs are everywhere! They can get onto your hands and items you touch throughout the day. Washing hands at key times with soap and water is one of the most important steps you can take to get rid of germs and avoid spreading germs to those around you.

How can washing your hands keep you healthy?

Germs can get into the body through our eyes, nose, and mouth and make us sick. Handwashing with soap removes germs from hands and helps prevent sickness. Studies have shown that handwashing can prevent 1 in 3 diarrhea-related sicknesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, such as a cold or the flu.

Handwashing helps prevent infections for these reasons:



People often touch their eyes, nose, and mouth without realizing it, introducing germs into their bodies.



Germs from unwashed hands may get into foods and drinks when people prepare or consume them. Germs can grow in some types of foods or drinks and make people sick.



Germs from unwashed hands can be transferred to other objects, such as door knobs, tables, or toys, and then transferred to another person's hands.



What is the right way to wash your hands?

1. Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
3. Scrub all surfaces of your hands, including the palms, backs, fingers, between your fingers, and under your nails. Keep scrubbing for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
4. Rinse your hands under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

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When should you wash your hands?

Handwashing at any time of the day can help get rid of germs, but there are key times when it's most important to wash your hands.

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the bathroom, changing diapers, or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal food or treats, animal cages, or animal feces (poop)
- After touching garbage
- If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy

What type of soap should you use?



You can use bar soap or liquid soap to wash your hands. Many public places provide liquid soap because it's easier and cleaner to share with others. Studies have not found any added health benefit from using soaps containing antibacterial ingredients when compared with plain soap. Both are equally effective in getting rid of germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

How does handwashing help fight antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria resist the effects of an antibiotic – that is, germs are not killed and they continue to grow. Sickneses caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria can be harder to treat. Simply using antibiotics creates resistance, so avoiding infections in the first place reduces the amount of antibiotics that have to be used and reduces the likelihood that resistance will develop during treatment. Handwashing helps prevent many sicknesses, meaning less use of antibiotics.

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For more information and a video demonstration of how to wash your hands, visit the CDC handwashing website:

www.cdc.gov/handwashing





It can be easy to overindulge in treats during the holidays, but it is still possible to eat healthy during the season.

PATH TO IMPROVED HEALTH

Whether it's sitting around the family dinner table or munching on endless snacks at a party, the holidays mean food. Lots of food. It can be hard to keep from overdoing it, but it is possible. If you're hosting a meal or party, or attending one, try these tips to keep the holidays healthy.

IF YOU'RE THE HOST:

1. **Shop smart.** Grocery stores can be traps, both intentionally and unintentionally. Try shopping during off hours. Instead of rushing around and grabbing the first things you see to get out of the crowd, you can take your time to read labels and choose healthier foods. Also, try to pick items from the outside perimeter of the store. This is where the whole, more nutritious foods are located.
2. **Focus on produce.** Whether you're making appetizers or a full meal, amp up the fruits and veggies in your meals. Cook them in ways that celebrate their natural flavors instead of hiding them under heavy sauces or glazes. Healthy swap: Exchange the cream of mushroom soup and fried onions for a green bean casserole. Instead, toss fresh beans with olive oil, garlic, and sea salt, and roast them in the oven for a crisp, light, and healthy side dish.
3. **Lighten up your recipes.** Reduce fat and calories without missing out on taste by making some of these substitutions:
 - Replace 1 egg with 2 egg whites to cut cholesterol.



- Instead of oil, margarine, or butter in baked items, substitute applesauce to reduce fat.
- Always use fat-free versions of creamy ingredients such as yogurt, sour cream, or whipped topping.
- Use reduced-fat cheeses in casseroles and salads.



IF YOU'RE A GUEST AT A DINNER OR PARTY

1. **Eat regularly.** Don't eat less the day of a big party so that you'll have "room" to eat a lot later. Eat regular, small meals throughout the day. This will keep you from getting too hungry and overeating at the event.
2. **Eat before you go.** If you're worried about resisting the delicious but unhealthy foods at the event, eat a nutritious snack before you go. It will take the edge off your appetite and keep you from overeating.
3. **Use a small plate.** Research shows we tend to fill our plates, no matter what size they are. So choose a small plate and you won't be able to fit as much on it.
4. **Start simple.** Fill your plate with veggies, fruits, green salads, and lean meats. If you see a yummy looking side dish that is high in calories, take just a taste of it. You can go back for more later, if you're still hungry. Chances are, after filling up on all that healthy food, you won't be too hungry. You'll be better able to resist the casseroles and gravies that looked so good at first.
5. **Wait 10 minutes.** After you've eaten your small plate of healthy choices, wait 10 minutes. This will give your brain the time it needs to tell your stomach if it's full. Often, after that amount of time, our hunger cravings will be satisfied.
6. **Limit alcohol.** When you get to the party, start off with a low-calorie, non-alcoholic drink, such as sparkling water or a diet soda. This will help quench your thirst. Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic ones throughout the evening.
7. **When you eat, eat mindfully.** Savor each bite. Put your fork down between bites. Focus on the flavor and enjoy what you're eating.
8. **Socialize away from the food.** If you're standing around talking at a party, do it away from the food. You'll be less likely to spot something that you can't resist.
9. **Find activities that don't involve food.** Take a walk. Grab a few family members and take a stroll around the neighborhood. Play football in the yard, or engage others in a board game. Take the focus off the food.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

It can be easy to fall into the trap of overeating healthy foods. You might think that because the food is good for you, you can eat more of it. But be aware of portion sizes. Getting too much of a good thing can be just as bad as eating something unhealthy.



WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

Your doctor can help you to determine whether you are at a healthy weight and what steps to take to achieve a healthy weight, even if the holidays are approaching.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

1. What can I do before the holidays to help myself eat better when the time comes?
2. What are good foods to eat during the holidays?
3. How can I change my habits so that I don't overeat?
4. How can I modify my recipes to make them healthier?



THE 12 PRICELESS GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS AND BEYOND

This is a special time of the year. We get to celebrate the season, say goodbye to a year and welcome a new one with renewed optimism.

We love the holidays—the lights, the music, and especially our human connection.





During this season cheerfulness, kindness, and generosity become the norm. One can't help but be swept away by this surge of goodness.

Part of the holiday season involves gift giving. And there is nothing wrong with buying someone you care about a gift that expresses your love and appreciation. The look on someone's face when he or she unwraps a gift is one of the most gratifying feelings—to know that you made a difference and brightened a loved one's day.

But putting aside traditional gift giving, the holidays can be an expression of pure love.

There are things we can do today, and every day, that will be a gift to anyone—things that will deepen our bond and convey love more than any material gift. They don't cost money, and they can't be quantified.

In the true spirit of the holidays, let's look at gifts that can't be bought and sold.

12 GIFTS OF LOVE



These are the acts that we can do, starting right now. We don't need a special time or place. We don't need money, or a shopping mall.

We invite you to join us and use as many of the gifts below (or your own ideas) for the rest of this month, and maybe after.



1. Attention - Giving your undivided attention to the people you care most about, without distractions, is one of the most generous gifts anyone can give. No cellphones, no social media, no TV.



2. Kindness - We can consciously choose kindness in every interaction we have. We can be kind with our words, and actions. Kindness is not only a gift to others, but a gift to ourselves.



3. Acceptance - Letting people know that you accept them as they are for who they are touches their hearts and lifts their spirits.



4. Validation - Acknowledge others and let them know that you see them, you hear them, and you value them. See others the way they like to be seen. It's a precious gift they'll always cherish.





5. **Smile** - Smile at anyone and everyone. A smile is a universal language that brightens the day and warms the night.



6. **Touch** - A gentle touch connects us to a loved one. We don't need words when our atoms connect—even for a second.



7. **Words of encouragement** - Kind and uplifting words vibrate with love and support.



8. **Embrace** - Hug people with all you've got. Let them feel the warmth of your heart and the love in your being. Feel their warmth and love. Feel our oneness.



9. **A helping hand** - Helping with house chores, cooking, or decorations can be a fun time to connect with loved ones. And it will be greatly appreciated.



10. **Free time and space** - Let loved ones have their own free time to do what they want, or have time to themselves, and take over their responsibilities. They'll truly appreciate this precious gift of freedom and solitude.



11. **Playing and sharing moments** - Do anything with family and loved ones. Play a game, sing a song, dance, make funny faces, or anything else that can bring joy and laughter.



12. **Being there** - It all boils down to simply being there for the ones we care about the most. Be there—mind, body, heart, and soul. It's the gift that we all aspire to give and receive.

Let's make our holiday celebrations about generosity of the heart, kindness of the spirit, and love in its highest form—simply being there without agendas, or expectations.

And when we do, every moment we share with others is pure unadulterated joy.

Happy Holidays dear friends. You are greatly loved and appreciated.

Best
GIFTS
ever





The Legend of the Candy Cane

*Look at the candy cane.
What do you see?
Stripes that are red like
the blood shed for me.
White is for my Savior
who's sinless and pure.
"J" is for Jesus, my Lord,
that's for sure!
Turn it around and
a staff you will see.
Jesus, my sheperd,
was born for me!*

author unknown



Resources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/fact-sheets.html>
<https://familydoctor.org/tips-eating-healthy-holidays/>
<https://www.onewithnow.com/priceless-gifts/>

