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OPINION

WISHING YOU GOOD MENTAL HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO MINIMIZE STRESS
AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, WRITES MCGREGOR



MELANIE
MCGREGOR
Column

The countdown to Christmas is on, and many of us are likely a little (or more than a little) extra busy and stressed.

This time of year can certainly bring its share of overload as we fit the myriad of holiday tasks into our days, and that can mean that self-care and the things we usually do to maintain our health and wellness go out the window.

So what can we do to keep a healthy balance and give ourselves the gift of well-being? A bunch of our team members at the Canadian Mental Health Association have some great suggestions to offer:

• Any day that you can, bundle up and go on a walk! I find myself sitting inside too much in the winter, which takes a toll on my mental health. The vitamin D and fresh air (even though it's chilly) always

makes me feel better!

• I keep myself on a budget when money is to be spent and remember that the holidays are not just about spending money on others - they're about spending time with others.

• When having a stressful/hard day, I remind myself that "this will pass." Being mindful of the way snow looks on trees and surroundings when I am feeling stressed or need to be more mindful helps too.

• I enjoy watching all the holiday movies, listening to the holiday songs, and decorating - it helps bring the spirit of the season to life for me. I actually leave my decorations up until late January!

• Keep it simple. I buy holiday treats because I hate baking and I ask people to bring dishes for the big dinner. It's a load off my mind.

• Sleep! Don't work yourself to the point of exhaustion for the sake of one day.

• I use the Headspace app all the time for myself and my family. Just doing a five-minute meditation to-

gether is so calming. I like the way there are specific ones for when you are under the weather, feeling overwhelmed, are a student etc.

• I structure in my calendar tasks or activities that are for my interest/wellness - reading time, organizing time, or time to watch something with my kids. This way, they are given importance and I feel more balanced.

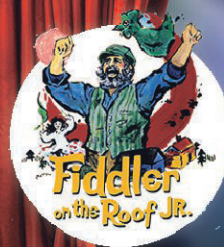
• I make a "tonic." I boil, steep and strain fresh ginger, fresh turmeric, black pepper, cinnamon, cayenne, fresh garlic, lemon juice, and apple cider vinegar. Then every morning or when someone is feeling a little under the weather, we drink a "shot" of the tonic or add some warm water and drink it like a tea. It tastes terrible but alkalizes the body and is the perfect energizer!

• I keep traditions that I enjoy and try different things. This year, my family is going to see the Star Wars movie on Christmas Eve night, and I can't wait!

We wish you a happy, healthy, and balanced holiday season full of the things that matter most to you.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch, which provides mental health/addiction community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmhahalton on Twitter.

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