



December

December is a month filled with both joyous and stressful times. It is surrounded by holiday events and family gatherings that you may or may not want to attend. Your goal is to try a few tips to help you relax, stay calm, and enjoy the magical time of year that it can be.

Learn to recognize your triggers. Be aware of how you feel throughout each day. If you notice your heart racing, stomach cramping, or muscles tightening, your body may be responding to stress. Take a moment to stop and assess what is causing the stress and make a note of it. The more you are aware of the things that trigger a reaction, the better you will be able to handle them. Often stress and depression go hand-in-hand. If you are susceptible to seasonal depression, have been diagnosed or have a family history of depression, make sure you are taking time to focus on you and get the help you need from a health professional.

When you keep your body mentally alert by eating right, getting enough rest, and exercising, you are able to handle stressful situations more calmly and rationally. Unmanaged stress could make you more susceptible to colds; the flu; headaches; and skin, muscle, and digestive problems.

Set aside a few minutes each day to write down things that mean the most to you in a journal. Are they friends, family, a roof over your head, a favorite hobby, or a passed-down treasure from long ago? Whatever you are thankful for, keep it as a reminder when you are in a stressful situation and focus on the positives in your life.

In stressful situations, change what you can. If the stressor isn't important, or if it's out of your control, why worry about it? Many of the things that bother us in life are beyond our control. Learning to do the best that you can and knowing that is all that is expected of you, is important.

For just a few moments, pause, take a breath, and relax. Do something that helps you relax. Whatever it is that helps you slow down and focus should be your goal. You can try yoga, a walk, or meditation. Deep breathing exercises are also very helpful when trying to reassess a situation and calm down. When things seem to be spinning out of control, take a deep breath and slowly breathe out as you count to 10. This will help clear your mind so you can respond with an open mind. Challenge yourself to try this at least once each day and assess if it makes a difference when you don't automatically react to a situation. It's never too late to start feeling good again!

HEARTY TOMATO SOUP

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp. margarine or butter
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (1/2 cup)
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil leaves
- 2 (3 oz.) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/4 c. milk
- 2 (10 3/4 oz.) cans condensed tomato soup
- 2 (16 oz.) cans whole or diced tomatoes, undrained

Preparation:

Melt margarine in 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Cook onion and garlic in margarine about 2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onion is tender; remove from heat. Stir in Paprika, basil and cream cheese. Gradually stir in milk and soup. Beat with hand beater until smooth. Stir in tomatoes, breaking them up. Heat over medium heat, stirring frequently, until hot.

Nutrition Information (serves 8):

Calories: 195; Total Fat: 12g; Saturated Fat: 2g; Polyunsaturated Fat: 0;
Carbohydrates: 19g; Protein: 5g; Sodium: 830mg; Fiber: 2g

Source:

Meals Matter – Meal Planning Made Simple

<http://www.mealsmatter.org/recipes-meals/recipe/14445>



DECEMBER CHALLENGE

December can be one of the most stressful times of the year. Chill out between holiday gatherings and winter events. Make it a goal to manage your stress and well-being. Below are items to try throughout the month to make small, but achievable changes that really make a difference.

Complete a minimum of one tip per day for 20 days. As you finish a healthy tip, check the circle to track your progress. Remember, you can use these tips more than once.

- ☐ I delegated at least one household chore to another family member.
- ☐ I did 30 minutes of low impact exercise today.
- ☐ I went to bed 1 hour earlier than I usually do.
- ☐ I enjoyed a cup of decaf coffee, tea, or hot chocolate.
- ☐ I listed out projects that I needed vs. wanted to complete and focused on those that needed to get done first.
- ☐ I took time to spend with my family and friends today.
- ☐ I ate healthy meals throughout the day.
- ☐ I took a relaxing hot shower or bath for 20 minutes.
- ☐ I spent time doing one hobby or fun activity just for me.
- ☐ I went to the mall during the week instead of the weekend to do holiday shopping.
- ☐ I prepared meals ahead of time on the weekend to allow me more time during the work week.
- ☐ I picked out and ironed my clothing the night before.
- ☐ I followed a yoga DVD or purchased a massage.
- ☐ I did deep breathing exercises today.