



Happy
HOLIDAYS

*vet
candy*

Dr. Jessica Turner's
ultimate guide to a healthy
and happy holiday.



Contents

LETTER FROM DR. JESSICA 4

MY GO-TO HOLIDAY RECIPES 5

We got some delicious healthy recipes for you to try out!

WHY YOU NEED TO RETHINK YOUR HOLIDAY DRINKING PLANS 10

Why not try to take alcohol out of your holiday plans this year?

3 HOLIDAY FOODS THAT ARE ACTUALLY GOOD FOR YOU 14

Even during the holidays, you can eat healthy.

MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY READS 17

Dr. Jessica has some great books for your holiday reading time.

4 WAYS TO A HEALTHIER HOLIDAY 20

We got some great tips for making the holidays healthier!

GREAT ALTERNATIVES TO ALCOHOLIC DRINKS 23

Going alcohol free is easy with these tasty non-alcoholic drinks!

SECRETS TO DEALING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS 26

We have some great tips for dealing with holiday stress.

SMART MONEY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS 28

CJ Burnett and Tom Seeko from Florida Veterinary Advisors has some great tips for making smart money moves.

HOW TO FIT IN "ME TIME" DURING THE HOLIDAYS 30

Just because it is the holidays does not mean you can't enjoy some free time.





23

WHY YOUR MESSILY WRAPPED GIFT IS A GOOD THING

Studies show that messily wrapped gifts are better received.

GIVE THE GIFT OF WELLNESS... TO YOURSELF!

BEST HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS

We make it easy to find the best gifts!

HOW TO HANDLE VISITS WITH THE RELATIVES

ou aren't alone, we understand and have some great tips to make handing relatives much easier

HOW TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WHEN YOU ARE FAR FROM HOME

Don't be blue this holiday season, we've got you!

MAKE LIFE GOALS, NOT RESOLUTIONS THIS NEW YEAR'S

Text change: Resolutions are so last year, make life goals for 2022 with us!

33

37

40

43

47

49



27



33



44

DR. JILL LÓPEZ
Editor-in Chief

ANTONIO LÓPEZ
Creative Director

SHANNON GREGOIRE
Assistant Editor

LOKESH UPADHYAY
Executive Design Editor

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Features Editor

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News Editor

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Health and Wellness Editor

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Fitness Editor

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Published by
VET CANDY MEDIA

Chief Executive Officer
DR. JILL LÓPEZ

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Letter From Dr. Jessica

It's the most wonderful time of the year! I hope you are humming that song now because my brain can't help but fill in "with kids jingle belling and everyone telling you be of good cheer!"

On a serious note, I do believe it is the most wonderful time of the year but sometimes I find myself struggling to go along with the rest of this song and be of good cheer. Instead of slowing down and enjoying the magic that comes with the season, I find myself going at a pace that isn't sustainable. Then in the blink of an eye, the holidays are over and I am left wondering if I was even present for any of it. I somehow chose to focus on the things that didn't really matter and missed out on the ones that did.

Can you relate? Maybe it's because you are drowning in your already overflowing "to-do" list or the mere thought of how much money it's going to take to make the holidays a reality.

Or maybe you are approaching the first holiday season without a loved one or better yet, the first where you are focused on remaining sober in a sea of festive spirits. Whatever you are facing this holiday season, I got you covered with the "Living Well Holiday Special"!

Inside, you will find everything from healthier recipes to fun gift ideas to insight into being in charge of your finances instead of it being in charge of you. My hope is that this book along with the featured podcasts will leave you not only excited about the holidays but prepared to enjoy them as you should!

From my family to yours - Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

With so much love,

Dr. Jessica Turner





My go-to **HOLIDAY RECIPES**

Dr. Jessica Turner

One of the hardest things that we all deal with is trying to stay healthy during the holidays – and that means making sure to eat right and exercise, despite all the temptations to do the opposite.

One thing I like to do during the holidays is treat my family to some great-tasting foods that are actually quite healthy. Here are a few of my favorites:



Vegan sweet potato casserole with maple pecan topping:

» This recipe is a great dessert that anyone can make. I love that the ingredient list is pretty short, too.

🍷 Maple Pecan Topping:

- 3 tablespoons maple syrup or agave nectar
- 8 tablespoons almond flour or any flour
- 1 1/2 tablespoons melted vegan butter
- 1 1/2 cups pecans coarsely chopped, or walnuts

🍷 Sweet Potato Casserole:

- 3.3 pounds sweet potato peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons sugar (any kind works, brown, cane, or coconut sugar)
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup or agave nectar
- 1/4 cup vegan milk (any kind works)
- 6 tablespoons oil (any kind works, such as olive oil or unrefined coconut oil)
- 6 tablespoons vegan butter softened
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt

MORE



Sweet potato pie with spiced cream:

» When I have to bring a dish to a holiday get together, this is what I bring. I love the savory taste of the sweet potatoes with the spicy taste of the cream.

🍷 Ingredients

- 1 ½ pounds sweet potatoes
- ⅓ cup fat-free milk
- 1 (14-ounce) can fat-free sweetened condensed milk, divided
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon, divided
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- ½ (14.1-ounce) package refrigerated pie dough (such as Pillsbury)
- Cooking spray
- ½ cup (4 ounces) 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened

MORE

» I love to bake cookies with my girls and this one is especially fun. I also love the smell of gingerbread.

Flourless gingerbread cookies

🍷 Ingredients

- 1 large egg
- 3 tbsp (60 g) blackstrap molasses
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) coconut oil, melted
- 1/4 cup + 2 tsp (58 g) coconut sugar, divided
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon, divided
- 1 1/4 cup (140 g) almond flour
- 1/4 cup (28 g) coconut flour
- 1 tsp baking powder

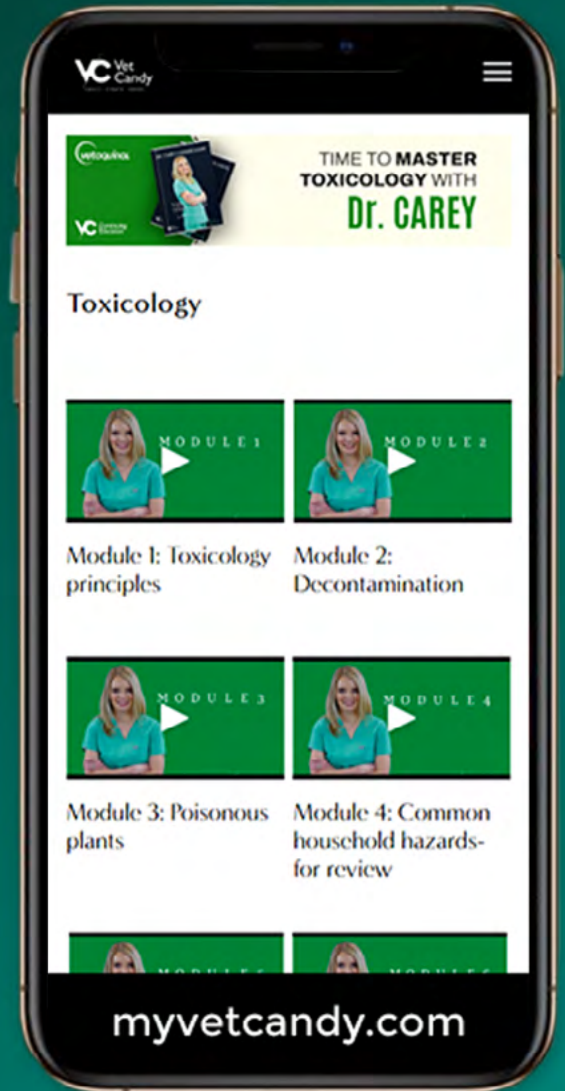
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Why you need to rethink your holiday drinking plans

Whitney Holcombe

For many of us, a delicious glass of wine at the end of the day is the perfect way to destress. As women, our days are busy spent child rearing, making meals, and cleaning all before we hit our 10 AM deadline at work. The complications of balancing home and work life is a constant reality for a lot of women these days. Throw in a pandemic and it's easy to see why the number of women who drink rose nearly 16 percent in recent years. Women like to drink and some women like to drink a lot. Unfortunately, alcohol has some serious health consequences, especially for women. Women are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol due to our generally smaller size, less amount of fluid in our bodies, and our lower levels of the enzyme that breaks down alcohol in our livers. Excessive alcohol use can lead to a myriad of health issues, including heart disease, cancer, and liver disease. Alcohol is typically in everlasting supply during the holidays, making it very tempting to imbibe. But if you think you may have an alcohol problem, you might want to rethink that spiked eggnog.





Should I Cut Back on Alcohol?

We tend to think of people with alcohol problems as spiking their orange juice in the morning or blacking out after a night at the bar. While these people certainly do have an alcohol problem, there are varying levels of alcohol dependency. Having a glass or two of wine every night at dinner might not seem all that harmful, but that one or two glasses can quickly become three, maybe even four. Heavy drinking for women is considered eight or more drinks per week. Only we can be truly honest with ourselves when it comes to our behavior towards alcohol. If you think you might have a problem with drinking, then you probably do. Fortunately, cutting back on alcohol has almost immediate positive effects on our health and wellbeing. Some of those effects include:

- Better sleep
- More energy
- Weight loss
- Less anxiety
- Better mood
- Stronger immune system



Surviving the Holidays Alcohol-Free

If you're thinking of cutting back on alcohol during the holidays, you might be faced with opposition. There is a phenomenon that occurs when people start drinking where drunk individuals insist anyone sober must join in. Peer pressure can be tough to handle, especially during the holidays. You might find it easier if you don't announce to your friends and family that you're trying to cut back. They may just push you harder. Instead, don't draw attention to the fact you're not drinking. Quietly order a non-alcoholic drink from the bar that looks like alcohol (club soda with lime, for example) or tell your friends you're not drinking because you're on medication. Show up to your holiday parties just long enough to say hi, then dip out before it gets too tempting to "have just one drink". Cutting back on alcohol will have only positive benefits on your health and wellbeing. You don't have to give it up forever, but taking some time off won't hurt.



Sing-a-long with Lucy Taylor

Meet the incredible Lucy Taylor, who's also known as the Traveling Vet Nurse. You can find her almost any place on the planet, including Lapland where she typically spends the the New Year as head elf.

Lucy tells us all about her amazing life traveling the world and saving animals plus she shares some of her favorite holiday songs.



3

holiday foods that are actually good for you

When the holidays roll around, most of us accept the fact that we will have to leave the top button of our pants undone. Thanksgiving and Christmas are two of the biggest days of the year for overeating in America. It's estimated that the average Thanksgiving meal tops off at around nearly 4,500 calories. Christmas dinner is not much better – and don't forget about the multiple holiday parties in between. Holiday foods are not known to be particularly low calorie or healthy. However, you may be surprised to hear that some of your favorite holiday treats aren't so bad! Below are 3 holiday foods that are actually good for you. If you're trying to reduce your guilt this holiday season, stick to some of these holiday favorites



Pumpkin Pie

You likely only eat pumpkin in the form of pie every year around the holidays, but pumpkin itself is a popular dish worldwide. Pumpkin is a winter squash that is technically classified as a fruit, though many people mistake it for a vegetable. The bright orange gourds are full of vitamins and minerals and low in calories when eaten by itself. Pumpkins are used in both savory and sweet dishes, but the favorite way to eat it tends to be pumpkin pie. One slice of pumpkin pie contains around 323 calories along with fair amounts of Vitamin A, Potassium, Magnesium, and Calcium. While it does have quite a lot of sugar, that can easily be managed by reducing the amount of sugar your pumpkin pie recipe calls for. Or not. We must get some enjoyment out of life, right?



Potatoes

The potato has provided humans with sustenance for hundreds of years now. They are cheap to get and are super versatile when it comes to making meals out of them. They are most commonly consumed during the holidays in their mashed form, loaded with salt and butter. While the salt and butter doesn't do wonders for your health, potatoes themselves pack a lot of nutrients. Potatoes are decent in calories (one medium potato has just 161 calories) and provide tons of fiber, potassium, vitamin-C, magnesium, and iron. What's even better is that they taste awesome almost any way you cook them. If you're trying to go lighter this holiday season, cut back on the butter, cream, and salt. Try mixing your mashed potatoes with alternatives like Greek yogurt or butter substitutes. You can also opt to roast them instead with just a tad of oil and salt. Yum.



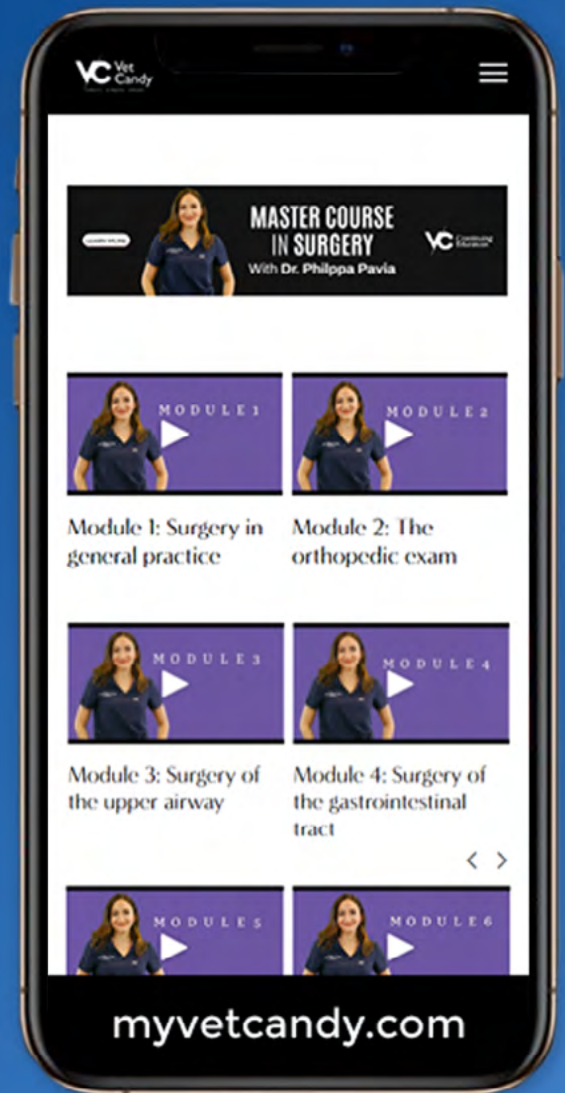
Turkey

Turkey is a lean protein that is one of the healthiest options you can go for at a holiday dinner. It only contains 169 calories per 3.5-ounce serving with the skin. The protein in turkey will keep you full longer, meaning you're less likely to go for seconds of pecan pie. Plus, it has a lot of essential vitamins and minerals like B12, Niacin, and Zinc. Turkeys are a centerpiece for most holiday dinners, so make sure you eat up. Just be careful with the gravy sauce, as that can add on a lot of extra calories and fat. Otherwise, don't be afraid to go for seconds, thirds, or even fourths of this protein- and vitamin-rich holiday favorite.

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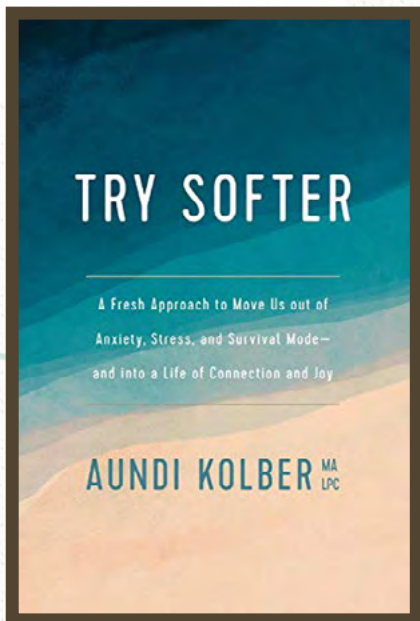
My favorite

Holiday Reads

Dr. Jessica Turner

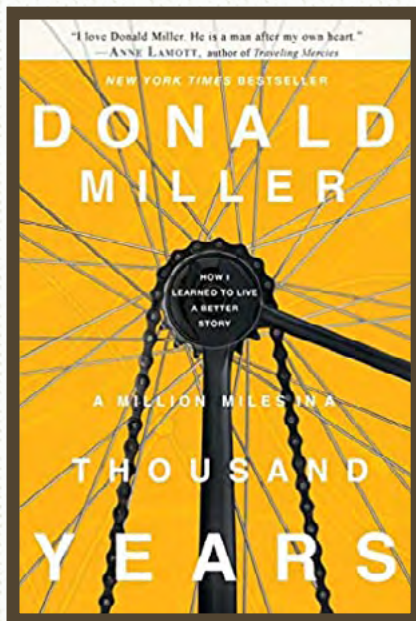
One of my favorite things about the holidays is finding some time for some “me time.” Those that know me well, know that I am obsessed with reading a good book, so most of that “me time” ends up being book time, albeit, I may end up multi-tasking with a bubble bath and a great read. Being an obsessive reader, I love to share my favorite reads with others and here’s a list of some really great books you should consider reading yourself or gifting to your friends:

Inspirational Books



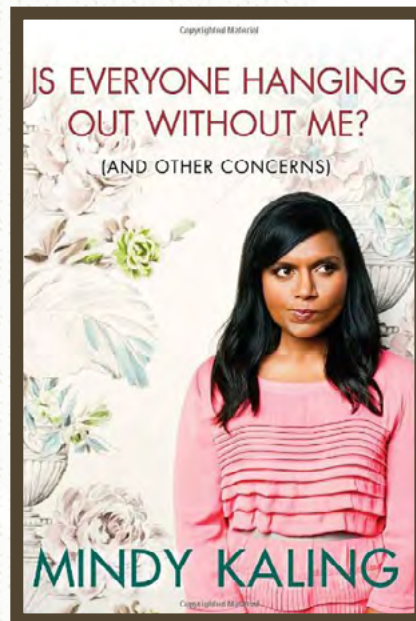
Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode--and into a Life of Connection and Joy by Aundi Kolber.

This book has been a game-changer for me! For anyone that struggles with anxiety (or any mental obstacle), this book will help you better understand why you think and act the way you do allowing you to make adjustments leading to a healthier and happier you. SO GOOD!



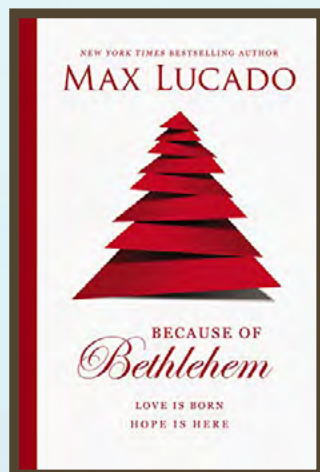
A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: How I Learned to Live a Better Story by Donald Miller.

I love Donald Miller and his method of storytelling. His ability to make you look at life at a slightly different angle through his own personal journey is captivating! I promise you will be ready to go do “the thing” that you have always wanted to do after reading this book!



Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? By Mindy Kaling.

If you need an easy, fun read, this is a great option! Most know Mindy Kaling from her role on *The Office* but that is just the tip of the iceberg of what makes her so special. In her debut book, you can expect to find that same comedic relief along with a glimpse of her journey to fame.



Because of Bethlehem by Max Lucado

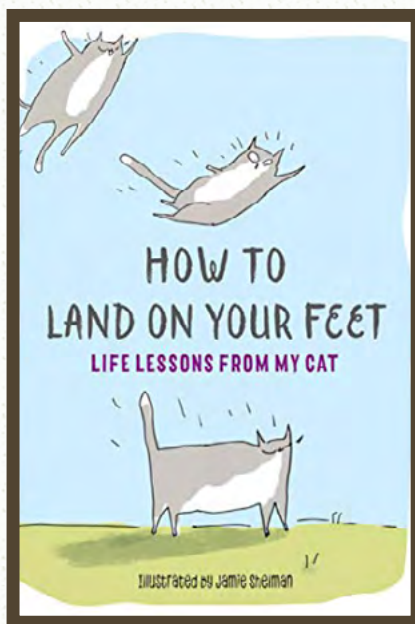
I can't have a holiday book list without mentioning a Christmas book! If you are looking to dive deeper into the meaning of Christmas, I highly recommend this book. Max Lucado has such a way with words you really can't go wrong with any of his work but *Because of Bethlehem* will leave you filled with Christmas wonder just like when you were a little child.

Fun/Gag-Gift Books



Five Dates by Mike Foster

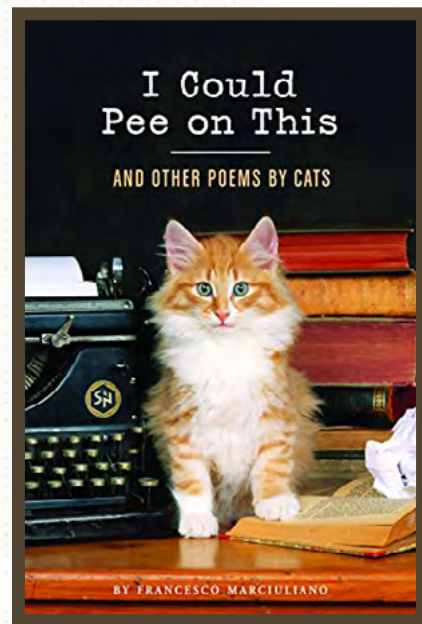
This is a book bundle meant to be used as a couple to help you grow closer together. The reason I love it so much is because it breaks down the barriers with communication that are often part of a relationship, whether you recognize it or not. In the end, you will have a better understanding of your significant other (as well as yourself) and a stronger connection altogether. Plus, it's a fun excuse to have a date night!



How to Land on Your Feet: Lessons From my Cat by Jamie Shelmair

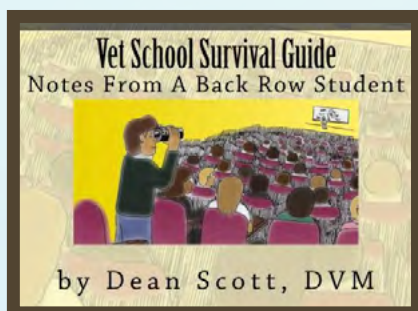
Inside this fun book, you will find 100 sage lessons from furry felines such as:

Be pleased with your achievements, however small and the best solution to a problem is a nap. Live *better*—live like your cat!



I Could Pee on This: And Other Poems by my Cat by Francesco Marciuliano

Animal lovers will laugh out loud at the quirkiness of their feline friends with these insightful and curious poems from the singular minds of funny cats. One can never have enough feline inspired books especially if you are a crazy cat lady like me!



Vet School Survival Guide: Notes From A Back Row Student by Dean W. Scott D.V.M

A throw-back from when I was in veterinary school over ten years ago! While some details may be outdated, I promise you will appreciate the inside jokes that only fellow veterinarians can come up with!

Do you have some great books you would like to share? Let us know by tagging @myvetcandy to be featured!



4 ways to a **HEALTHIER** **HOLIDAY**

Whitney Holcombe

The holidays are a time for friends and family to come together and celebrate the things they are grateful for. It's also a time for indulging in our favorite glutinous desserts (pumpkin pie anyone?) and maybe one too many glasses of wine. Too much food, along with too little time to exercise in between family gatherings and

gift shopping, leaves us with a few extra inches around the waistline long after the holidays have passed. It's no wonder gym memberships skyrocket on the first of the year. To avoid this all-too-familiar cycle, it's best to maintain healthy habits all year round. Read below for 4 ways to stay healthy during the holidays:

1 Include more healthy dishes

The holidays are the one time of the year we get to have all our favorite foods at the same time. While indulging a little on special occasions is fine, indulging a lot can negatively affect our health and waistlines. Consider switching out some of your usual indulgent holiday dishes with a healthier alternative. Keep some of your favorite dishes on the menu but add in some lighter dishes to go along with them. For example, eat that generous helping of creamy mashed potatoes, but have some grilled asparagus to go with it.

2 Pick and choose your indulgence

It's easy to go overboard during the holiday months when you have multiple holiday parties to attend. You want to take part in the festivities and enjoy yourself, as you should. However, enjoying yourself for two months straight quickly adds up on the scale. When considering your holiday party plans, pick and choose at which parties you will indulge. Decide to take it easy at the others and eat a healthy meal before you attend so you won't be so tempted. Additionally, you could choose to indulge only on the holiday itself.

3 Get in more steps

Life can be hectic from November through December. There is party planning to do, gifts to buy, and travel arrangements to make. Self-care typically goes on the backburner during these months, including our normal exercise routine. If you can't find time to fit in your usual hardcore cardio session at the gym, go for a walk. Walking is a great form of exercise that burns calories and helps reduce stress. Try to incorporate more walking into your daily routine when you can't make your usual gym sessions.



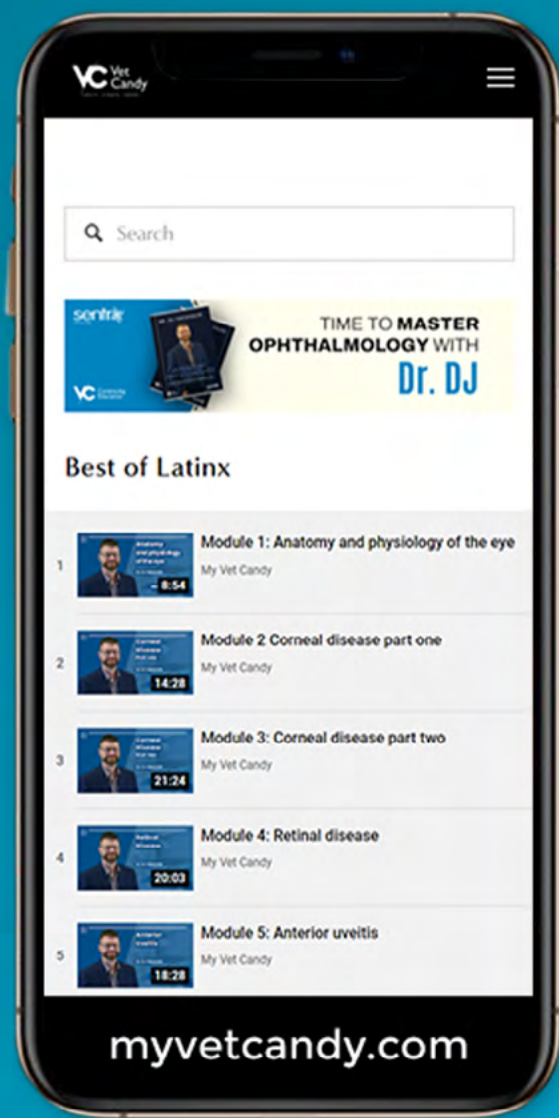
4 Take your vitamins

Colder weather, less sleep, and more stress are all factors that can lead to a weakened immune system. To avoid getting sick during the holidays, bolster your immune system with daily vitamins that strengthen the immune system and help to fight off infections. Vitamin C, vitamin D, and zinc are just a few helpful vitamins and minerals that are commonly used to prevent infections. Consider taking a daily multivitamin as well as incorporating more foods that are high in immune boosting vitamins like citrus fruits, leafy greens, turmeric, and garlic.

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GREAT ALTERNATIVES TO ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Dr. Jessica Turner

Going alcohol free is a healthier way to get through the holidays, but whatever your reason for cutting out alcohol, sometimes the hardest part is finding alternatives that satisfy your tastes. Looking for delicious non-alcoholic drinks and mocktails? Here's a great list for you!

Holiday Special - Non-Alcoholic Spirits/Brews

Favorite Spirits:



Ritual:

www.ritualzeroproof.com

I can't tell you how impressed I am with this line of non-alcoholic spirits! I have both the tequila and rum alternatives and they taste so closely to the real deal it's mind-blowing! Add some OJ to the tequila for a quick brunch cocktail or top your favorite soda with the spiced rum for an old faithful.



Seedlip:

www.seedlipdrinks.com/en-us

Grove 42 is zesty, citrus blend made using three types of Mediterranean Orange, Ginger, Lemongrass & Lemon peel. Perfectly paired with any mule mix for a quick and easy cocktail that is as sophisticated as they come! While I haven't tried any of the others, I am adding the Spice 94 to my cart NOW!



Favorite Brews:

I will admit that I am a beer lover so I have gone through quite a few non-alcoholic options in an attempt to find a good alternative. What I've found is the darker you go, the harder it is to achieve the true flavors of a good brew. For that reason, I stick to the lighter options with my favorites being Coors Edge ([https://www.coorsedge.com/](https://www.coorsedge.com/av?url=https://www.coorsedge.com/)) and Busch NA (<https://www.busch.com/products/busch-na.html>)



Favorite Wine:

www.frewines.com

When asked what line of non-alcoholic wines people preferred, Fre Wine was the one that came up the most! With a line including all of your favorite bubbly as well as classic whites and reds, you are bound to find something for your taste buds!

Festive Mocktail:

Christmas punch: 2 cups of cranberry juice, 2 cups of orange juice, 1 cup of pineapple juice, and 1 cup of ginger ale. Top with sliced oranges and cranberries for a festive touch!



Celebrating sobriety with Kimberly Parham


Getting sober can be the best thing you can ever do for your life. Besides being healthier, there are many other benefits sobriety can bring. On this episode of Living Well, we meet Kimberly Parham, a mother of two who is celebrating three years of sobriety. Kimberly tells her story in hopes it can inspire others to become sober and overcome the stigma of alcoholism.






Secrets to dealing with **HOLIDAY STRESS**

Whitney Holcombe



While the holidays can be a time for fun and laughter, they're also the most stressful days out of the year. Party planning, gift shopping, and in-laws are just a few of the reasons you may suffer from a stress-related breakdown during the holiday months. There's a lot to be done to ensure you keep the holiday spirit alive, but it's not worth having a breakdown over. It's important for your health and sanity to step back and find ways to de-stress. Check out the tips below for surviving the holidays without driving yourself nuts.

Take time for yourself



You may be busy doing things for other people during these months, but that doesn't mean you should neglect yourself and your needs. Make sure you are taking time out of every day to do things that benefit your health and well-being. Go for your usual gym session or schedule that much-needed massage. Finding the perfect gift for your niece is not worth losing your sanity over or skipping your healthy fitness routines. Let your friends and family know that for at least an hour every day, you will be unreachable. Turn off your cell phone notifications and enjoy your peace and quiet time.



Learn to say no

With so much on your plate, it's easy to stretch yourself thin when preparing for the holidays. Learn to say "no" when others ask favors of you that will add to your stress. If you are a natural people-pleaser, this can be tough to do. We want to make our friends and family happy, but we can't be everything for everyone. Decide what is most important for you and your loved ones and focus on getting those tasks done. Yes, you might be a great seamstress, but don't feel pressured to say yes to sewing your niece's school play costume when you've got your own matters to tend to. Setting boundaries will reduce the stress you feel from pleasing other people.

Forget perfection

You may feel pressure to ensure your family has a perfect holiday season. Finding the perfect gift, making the perfect holiday dinner, and making the house look perfect for the holidays is a lot to live up to. Don't lose sight of what the holidays are truly about, which is spending time with your loved ones. Perfect doesn't exist in the real world, so why should it apply to the holidays? Sometimes "good enough" will do, especially if it means you get to relax more. So what if the star on your Christmas tree doesn't sit perfectly straight? If it still brings you joy to look at, then that's all that matters. Let go of perfectionism and redirect that energy to enjoying the holiday season with your loved ones.



Smart money tips for the holidays

Tom Seeko and CJ Burnett

The holidays are a wonderful time of the year. While many of us will use the time to reconnect with family and friends, some of us are just looking forward to having time to relax from the normal day to day grind.

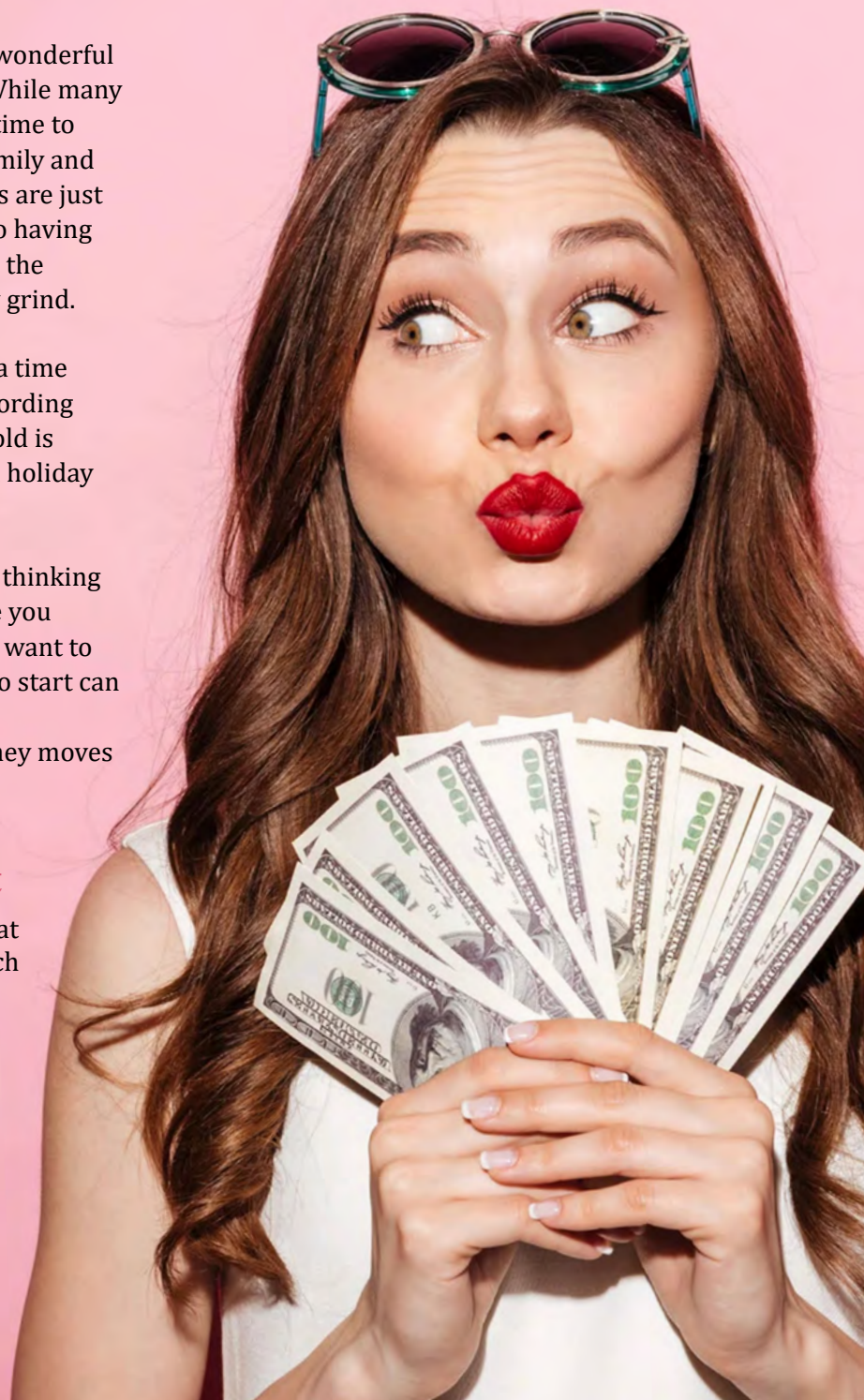
Holidays are also a time when we like to spend money. In fact, according to Deloitte, the average American household is expected to spend about \$1463 dollars on holiday gifts, goodies and travel this year.¹

Depending on your viewpoints on money, thinking of spending that much money might make you stressed. When it comes to spending, you want to make smart choices, but knowing where to start can be the hardest part.

Here are 3 helpful tips to make smart money moves this holiday season:

1. Create a holiday budget

Going into the holidays, you need to look at your budget and make a plan on how much you should spend this holiday season. Make a list of holiday gifts, travel expenses, and other costs and try to figure out how you can maximize your holiday celebration with the least amount of spending. A budget gives you clarity to know what you can spend without dramatically affecting your wallet.



2. Pay off your credit card every week

Credit cards can be helpful, especially around the holidays. But, if you used them as a bottomless spending account, you are probably going to run into trouble. When the interest rate is high and you are only making the minimum payments, it will take a very long time to pay them off.

A simple step that you can take is to use only one credit card and make an effort to pay the balance off every Friday. This way, you can have the convenience of a credit card without paying high interest rates. Knowing that you plan to pay it off each week may also help curb your spending.

3. Make smart money goals for 2022

We hear all the time that we should have financial goals. What we really need instead are reasons for planning. It can be very stressful whenever we approach our finances with an empty mind and no true direction, so take some time during the holiday break to dream about what your goals are. Do you want to save for a new car, a down payment on a house, or do you want to pay down your student loans? Make a plan to start 2022 on the right foot to meet that goal.

For more great tips, subscribe to our podcast by clicking on the link below:

Smarter Vet Financial Podcast

Tom Seeko and CJ Burnett are financial advisors and the cofounders of Florida Veterinary Advisors, a national firm that helps veterinarians across the US reduce stress in their finances by providing them the next step. They are the cohosts of Smarter Vet Financial Podcast, national speakers at conferences and schools, authors, and RACE Providers.

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1. Deloitte: Holiday Spending on Experiences Drives Gains, but Supply Chain and Inflation Challenges May Dampen Seasonal Cheer for Some: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/press-releases/holiday-spending-experiences-drives-gains-supply-chain-inflation-challenges-may-dampen-seasonal-cheer-for-some.html>





How to fit in “me time” during the holidays

AM Kuska

It's time for your daily meditation practice. You sit on your yoga mat on the floor, cross your legs, and take a long, slow breath – only to have the wind knocked out of you by an enthusiastic 5 year old who sees this as an invitation to work on her holiday list. You recover from the unexpected blow and send

the child her his way, only to have your spouse wander in wanting to know what's for dinner.

If you're struggling to get some personal time during the holidays, you're not alone. If you desperately need a break, here are a few thoughts on what you can do.



Relax on the screen time rules

If you really need a break, put on Mickey Mouse Clubhouse or let them play a game. Go to the other side of the house and breathe for a minute. You'll be a better parent for the rest of the time and the kids won't be permanently scarred by a little extra screen time.

Communicate with other

It's not always kids that are the problem. If you have roommates or an overly needy spouse, talk with them about needing more space. They may be feeling the same way and you can arrange for trading out personal time.

Me time can be a little bit hard to come by, but it's worth maintaining for the sake of your family. Neglecting yourself will harm others as well, so take your self-care seriously.





Get smart about holiday spending

The holidays are a wonderful time of the year. While many of us will use the time to reconnect with family and friends, some of us are just looking forward to having time to relax from the normal day to day grind.

Holidays are also a time when we like to spend money. In fact, according to Deloitte, the average American household is expected to spend about \$1463 dollars on holiday gifts, goodies and travel this year.¹

Depending on your viewpoints on money, thinking of spending that much money might make you stressed. When it comes to spending, you want to make smart choices, but knowing where to start can be the hardest part.

On this episode we meet the finance gurus from Florida Veterinary Advisors, CJ Burnett and Tom Seeko who give us some great tips on how to make smart money moves during the holidays. CJ, who in addition to being a financial advisor, is also an accomplished musician who ends the show with an amazing self-duet!



LISTEN



WHY YOUR MESSILY WRAPPED GIFT IS A GOOD THING

The pressure to find gifts for loved ones, co-workers, and other acquaintances will mount for many people as the holidays approach – and these purchases can add up quickly. Last year, U.S. adults projected that they would spend an average of \$885 on gifts, according to a Gallup survey.

While finding the perfect gift for someone is a worthy endeavor, researchers recently discovered an often-overlooked factor that can influence whether a recipient will be pleased with a present: how the gift is wrapped. The study abstract is available online in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

The investigators were interested in exploring the validity of the common assumption that recipients prefer gifts that are neatly wrapped. They hypothesized that the opposite may in fact be true. “When we receive a gift from a friend, we use the

wrapping as a cue about the gift inside and form expectations,” says Jessica Rixom, an assistant professor of marketing at the University of Nevada, Reno. “If it’s wrapped neatly, we set high expectations, and it’s hard for the gift to live up to those expectations.”

Rixom and her colleagues tested this hypothesis by asking study participants to unwrap a gift that was either neatly or sloppily wrapped. Inside, they found either an official Miami Heat or Orlando Magic mug. For this study, the researchers selected participants who were specifically Miami Heat fans but not Orlando Magic fans, so the Heat mug would be the preferred gift. After unwrapping it, the participants rated how much they liked the gift by answering five questions. The results showed that recipients had more favorable attitudes toward the sloppily-wrapped gifts, regardless of whether the mug represented their preferred basketball team.

To test whether expectations were in fact influencing recipients’ attitudes toward a gift, the researchers conducted another experiment in which participants saw images of either a neatly or sloppily wrapped gift. They indicated their expectations for





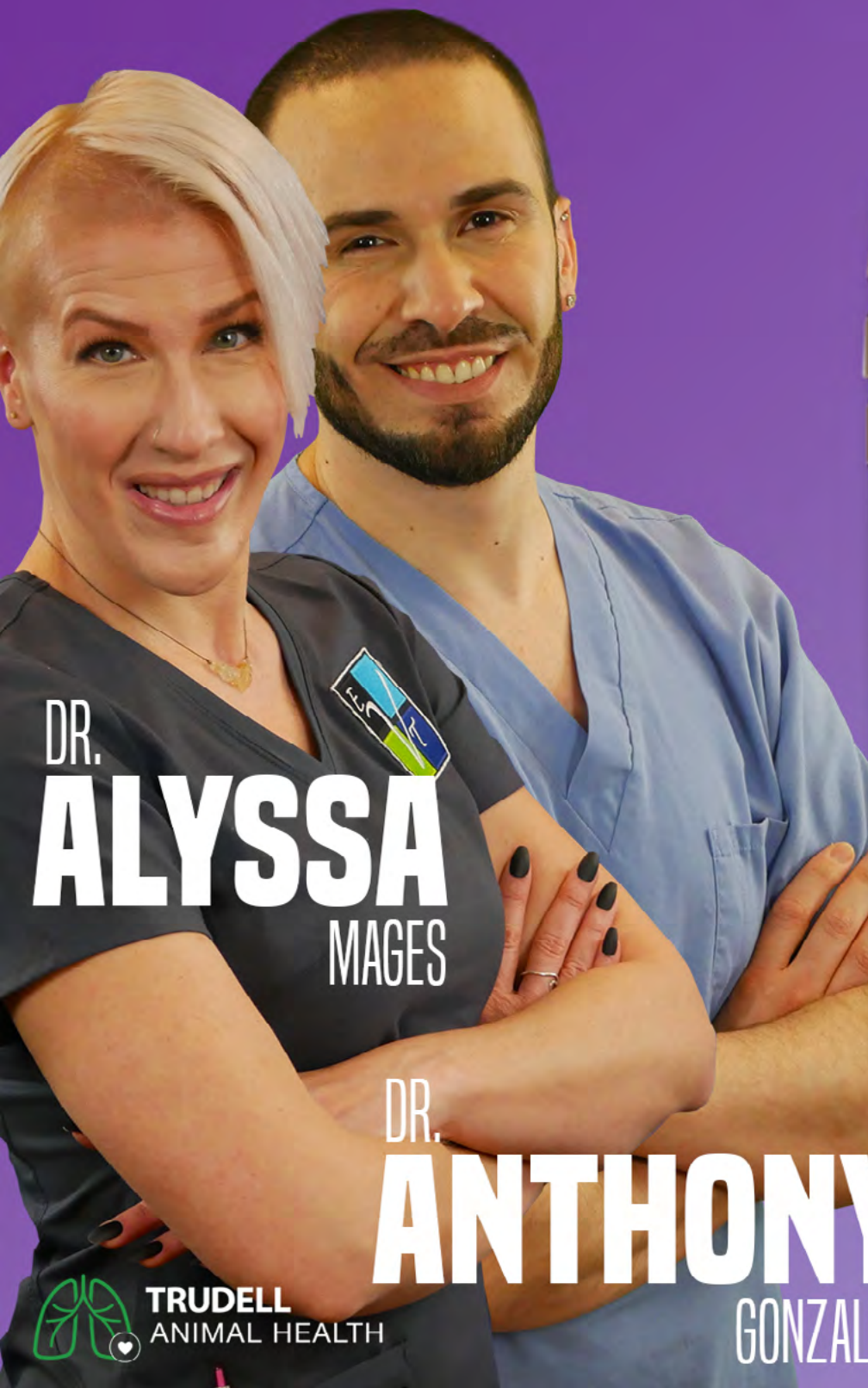
the gift and then saw what was inside: a pair of JVC earbuds. They then rated whether the gift matched their expectations. The results showed that the expectations were significantly higher for the neatly wrapped gifts than the poorly wrapped gifts, but the attitudes toward the gifts after opening them were lower for the neatly wrapped gifts.

Although gifts wrapped with imperfect paper creases and lopsided bows may be beneficial for gifts exchanged between friends, researchers discovered that this was not the case between acquaintances. A third experiment showed that when relationships are less established – acquaintances rather than friends – the gift recipients use the neatness of the wrapping paper as a cue to

sense the gift giver's value of the relationship. Gifts that are nicely wrapped suggest that the gift giver views the relationship as important – this positivity increases the chances that the recipient will like the gift.

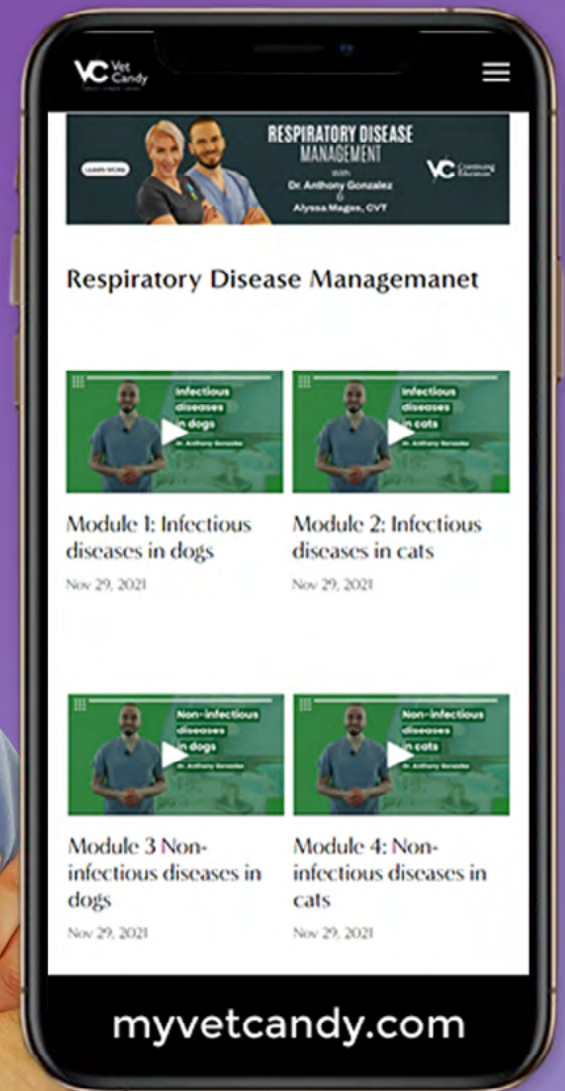
These findings could be useful when gift givers are deciding how much time to invest in wrapping a present or whether to pay for wrapping services at a store or mall. “If someone is questioning whether a gift is desirable for a friend and they try to make it more appealing by wrapping it well, this strategy may backfire in the end,” says Rixom. “On the other hand, it may be wise to go the extra mile with wrapping when giving a gift to an acquaintance.”

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Give the gift of wellness... **TO YOURSELF!**

Whitney Holcombe

The greatest gift you will ever receive is the gift of health. Without a healthy body, we cannot fully enjoy the many wonderful aspects of life most people take for granted. Unfortunately, many of us let our health and wellbeing fall to the wayside during the holiday season. We get caught up in busy holiday activities and maybe indulge in one too many glasses of eggnog. If the holiday months ever leave you feeling drained, or possibly with a case of the sniffles, then you should set an intention this season to focus on your own wellbeing.



Sleepy time

Lack of sleep can lead to increased anxiety and a weakened immune system. Your body needs sleep to function properly. If you have trouble getting a full eight hours each night, try making your sleep environment more conducive to rest. Make your room as dark as possible, limit noise distractions (try ear plugs if this isn't possible), and make sure your room temperature is comfortable. If you have an overactive mind that makes sleep difficult, consider listening to a guided meditation while you fall asleep. There are plenty of free guided meditations for sleep available on both YouTube and Spotify.

Let the sunshine in

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin we need to survive. Our bodies don't make vitamin D naturally, meaning we must get it from outside sources. Our biggest source of vitamin D comes from sunlight we absorb into our skin. Lack of vitamin D has been linked to depression and other mood disorders as well as a weakened immune system. While getting your daily dose of sunshine might be difficult in the winter if you live in northern climates, do your best to get outside when you can.





Say no to alcohol

A glass of wine may sound like just the thing you need to relax and unwind after a long day of gift shopping. However, while a glass of wine may seem like it's helping reduce your stress, alcohol can actually increase your anxiety. Alcohol changes the levels of serotonin in your brain, which is responsible for making you feel good. On top of that, too much alcohol leads to dehydration and a general feeling of being unwell – neither of which puts you in a good mood for slaving away in the kitchen all day preparing a holiday meal. To avoid the ill effects of alcohol, it's best not to consume any at all.

Enjoy the moment

Take time out of your day to do something that you enjoy. Whether that's watching an episode of your favorite Netflix show or going out to brunch with your friends, fun is essential to your wellbeing. The holidays may make you feel like you're on a tight schedule to get everything done in time. But if you don't make time for a little R&R, you'll burn out quickly. Do yourself a favor and try to have a little more fun this holiday season.





Best holiday gifts for friends and co-workers

Caitlin Palmer

Deciding on what to get your friends and co-workers for the holiday isn't always easy. You want to get them something they'll enjoy, but also find useful. Ideally, that something won't break the bank yet won't make you look cheap either. If you're having trouble checking off everyone on your holiday shopping list this season, we've got some suggestions below to help you out. As with any gift, it's the thought that ultimately counts. However, hopefully your friends and co-workers will enjoy these gifts just as much as we think they will. Plus, all of them can be purchased online, which makes gift shopping way easier. So sit back, relax, and get your credit card ready, because you're about to get all of your holiday shopping done right now.



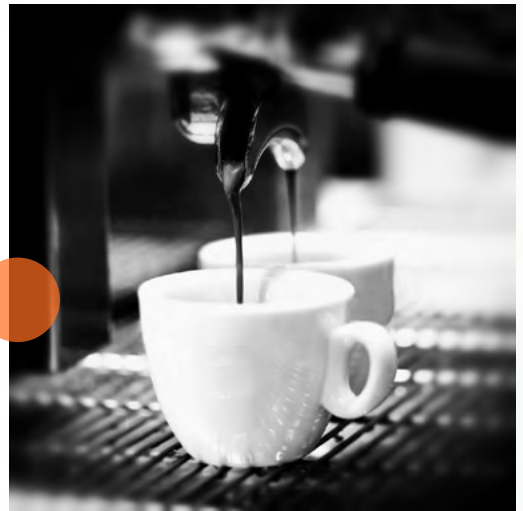
Wearable blanket

Who doesn't love wrapping up with a cozy blanket and lounging on the couch all day? With the Comfy Original Wearable Blanket, your friends or co-workers can lounge in style. Half-sweatshirt half-blanket, your friends and co-workers will enjoy this cozy gift that will keep them warm all winter.



Portable espresso machine

For coffee lovers, the mini portable espresso machine from Wacaco is perfect for brewing up rich tasting espresso on the go. Perfect for camping trips or even at the office, the easy-to-use coffee machine makes getting a caffeine high quick and convenient.



Neck massager

Everyone appreciates a nice neck massage. With the heated electric neck massager from Mocolshle, your friends and co-workers can relax at the end of the day with a little self-care. It's great for use at home or even in the office sitting in their desk chair.

Shower bombs

In keeping with the self-care theme, these luxury shower bomb soaps from Kandoona are perfect for friends and co-workers who like a little home-spa treatment. Made from natural ingredients and essential oils, shower bombs make for a fun way to reduce stress and get clean at the same time.



Bluetooth speaker with mood lighting

Portable Bluetooth speakers are always convenient to have around. This Bluetooth speaker from Gallstep doubles as an alarm clock and nightlight that changes color. Cool new gadgets always make fun gifts when you're struggling to find the perfect gift for friends or co-workers.

Giftable candles

Candles make great gifts for anyone who enjoys a relaxing evening at home with a lovely, scented candle flickering on the coffee table. This giftable scented candle from Miami Home smells like delicious lavender vanilla and is decorated with its own inspirational message.



Mindfulness prompt cards

Most of us could benefit from slowing down and bringing more awareness to our daily tasks. These mindfulness prompt cards are an assortment of suggestions for how to be more mindful. Your friends and co-workers can pick a card every day for a new tip on how to be more mindful and bring more Zen into their lives.



How to handle visits with the relatives

Whitney Holcombe

By Caitlin Kiarie

It's that time of year again. Time for brisk mornings, cozy nights, and your favorite Christmas movies on replay. The holidays are here and, with them, more time to relax with our loved ones. Family is important, especially during the holidays. But what about family members that you, uh, can't stand? Unfortunately, we can't choose our family. Sometimes we are forced to deal with people we don't get along with simply because we share familial ties. This can cause added stress to the holidays that we have no choice but to deal with. Thankfully, we've got a few tips for handling your awful in-laws or annoying cousins.

Plan to have a good time

We can't control what other people say or do. What we can do is control how we react to what those people say or do. Set your intention for the holidays to enjoy yourself no matter what your crazy uncle says or does at the dinner party. It's not realistic to expect him to behave, not if he has upset you nearly every year prior. Accept that your relatives will always be who they are and,

no matter how upset they make you, they won't change. Instead, shrug off their bad behavior and go back to sipping eggnog next to the family dog. Who cares if your sister and her on-again, off-again husband are going at it again? Your only concern should be whether or not to have a third piece of pumpkin pie. Yum.

Avoid touchy subjects

Families don't agree on everything, which is fine until they're all in the room together at the same time. To avoid any potential blowouts, try to avoid bringing up subjects you know will set someone off. Commenting on politics, religious beliefs, or child rearing are generally touchy topics for most people. Do your best to steer the conversation away from any potential subject that might get someone riled up. Quickly change the conversation if one does somehow get brought up, or simply announce to your family that you don't want to talk about it. Let your family know that you want everyone to enjoy themselves, not bicker. The arguing can be saved for another time, not during the holidays.





Stay busy

It's hard to get into arguments when you're too busy to start one. If you're really having a hard time being around your relatives this time of year, stay busy outside the house. Offer to do the grocery or last-minute gift shopping runs. Do some work around the house or take the dog for a walk more often. Do your best to stay occupied so you have less chance to run into a disagreement with your cousin from Wichita who always finds a way to throw a demeaning comment your way. If you run out of chores to do, keep everyone else busy by suggesting a group activity. Put on a movie or start playing a group game you can all do together. Keeping them occupied will benefit them as much as it will benefit you. If they're busy playing charades, they'll be too busy to get under your skin.

Maggie Rose wants to help

Meet Maggie Rose, the Founder & CEO of The Inspired Company and a Forbes 30 Under 30 nominee. After coping with the death of a close friend to suicide, Maggie Rose had a shift in studies to psychology and began sculpting her passion for suicide prevention in the form of mental health awareness and education. This led her to create an app that makes mental health counseling accessible to all.





HOW TO CELEBRATE **THE HOLIDAYS** when you are far from home

Whitney Holcombe

COVID made holidays a lot harder to see our friends and family last year. While many COVID restrictions have been lifted since then, some families are remaining cautious. This may mean you won't be travelling to your aunt's house for the huge family get-together like you normally would. For those of you who live alone, spending the holidays by yourself might sound lonely. Many people struggle with loneliness and depression during the holiday months. COVID made those statistics even greater. However, spending the holidays on your own doesn't have to be so bad. Read below for a few tips on how to celebrate the holidays away from your loved ones.

Continue holiday traditions

Just because you'll be ringing in the New Year all on your lonesome doesn't mean you shouldn't celebrate the holidays like you normally would. In fact, why not go all out this year? Go wild on holiday decorations until it looks like a Martha Stewart catalog threw up in your house or apartment. Bake gingerbread cookies and eat them all by yourself (yum). Binge-watch all your favorite Christmas movies while sipping eggnog in your pajamas. The holidays are a magical time of the year. Make the most of them while you can, even when you've got no-one to celebrate them with.

Make greeting cards

We all wish we were the kind of person who remembered to send holiday greeting cards every year. But, somehow, we just never seem to get around to it. If you're spending the holidays away from family this year, you'll have more time on your hands. Make this the year that you get your address book out and send a thoughtful holiday greeting to all your friends and family. You likely won't be the only one spending the holidays away

from home. A greeting card will mean even more to someone who is also missing their friends and family. If you want to go the extra mile, buy a tripod and snap a picture of you wearing your ugliest Christmas sweater. Stick it in with your greeting card to ensure you bring a smile to your loved ones' faces.

Host a virtual holiday party

Nowadays, we don't have to hop on a plane to see our loved ones who live on the other side of the country. Thanks to technology, we can see our loved ones' faces on our phones and computer screens. Zoom meetings rose in popularity during lockdowns for giving people the opportunity to meet up virtually. Families can take advantage of the platform to have a virtual meetup with multiple people at the same time. Plan a date that works for you all and prepare as you would for a normal party. Pick out a festive holiday outfit and break out the champagne as you joke and share stories with your family members from the comfort of your couch. It's the next best thing to seeing your family in person and makes spending the holidays alone a little more bearable.





Make life goals, not resolutions this New Year's

AM Kuska

Most of us are familiar with goal setting. We vow to lose weight or get a new raise at work. Many times, however, we are so busy chasing these smaller goals that we fail to look at the big picture. Life goals are the big goals in life. The goals that define who we want to be as people and what we want out of our lives.

Big goals might be traveling the world, founding a charity that empowers women, or maybe earning a gold medal in the Olympics. They define the things you really want out of life. It could be as simple as raising a family on an urban homestead, or as complex as becoming the CEO of a Fortune 500 company.

Few people formally put their life goals in writing because, after a busy day of just surviving, kicking back on the couch is just so much more appealing. Life goals are important, though, because they can give the life you have – yes, even those moments when you're just vegging on the couch – more purpose.

If you're ready to set some goals, here are a few tips on getting started.

Think about what's most important to you

List out on paper all of the things in life that are important to you. The things that you dream of doing, as well as the things that you just enjoy. Once you've listed everything you can think of, start narrowing it down until all you have left are dreams you can't live without. When you've narrowed it down to just these dreams, you've got your life goals.

Overcoming obstacles in your way

'You can do anything you set your mind to!' is a common phrase used to encourage children, but when faced with the sheer impossibility of some tasks, that seems like a particularly hard thing to do. Many of us struggle to quit just one bad habit alone, such as smoking – let alone having the drive to run hard enough to compete in a marathon.

If you have big obstacles in your path, such as being too poor to travel or wanting to go carbon free in the middle of a city, it can seem like there's no way to reach your goal.

The good news is, with good luck you will have a full lifetime in which to reach your goals. The trick is to break the goal down into manageable pieces, so you can move closer to your goal little by little. No one woke up one day and went from the couch to Iron Man in a single day. If you want to run a marathon, a step in the right direction is as simple as putting on your sneakers and going for a walk.

Having life goals can change who you are as a person. When you know more about what you want out of your life, it helps you make small shifts in what you do each day, so you can get closer to that goal one step at a time.

