

## New Year 2019

As the New Year approaches and we pass through the early winter holiday season culminating with the welcoming of the New Year, many take time to reflect on the year gone by and look ahead with promise and determination. While the presence of the holidays can invoke kindness, love, togetherness and generosity these times are not all joy and happiness or always something that folks look forward to.

Many individuals report increased stress related to the holidays and research supports these claims. According to the American Psychological Association; 8 in 10 individuals anticipate increased stress during the holidays. (43%) report that financing the holidays is a major stress factor, with (62%) adding that lack of finances is a concern. (67%) identify a lack of time as burdensome while the hype and commercialism around the holidays is troubling for (53%). The pressure of gift giving (47%) and obligations to attend work and family gatherings (44%) are other causative factors contributing to heightened stress.

There is an increase in depression and anxiety as well and experts offer some suggested activities that can help alleviate some of the stress. Dr Judith Orloff at UCLA suggests spending more time in sunlight which stimulates the production of the neuro transmitter Serotonin which can alleviate the effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder. Spending time outdoors or near a window on sunny days can be advantageous. Others remind us that citrus fragrances can boost feelings of well-being. Have you ever driven past or been near lemon trees or an orange grove? The aroma can be, as the song (Lemon Tree) suggests, intoxicating and one of the more pleasant fragrances known to mankind. One suggestion is to dab some on a handkerchief and keep it with you during the day. Walking is also known to calm stress, lift spirits and bring tranquility to our brains while reducing anxiety and improving sleep. A Chinese practice involves the Hoku spot on the hand. Located on the fleshy part of your hand between the thumb and index finger, applying pressure here for 30 seconds is known to reduce stress as well. Try it now!

There is a certain amount of holiday related stress we all endure during the season of giving. Many of us are conditioned to do more and neglect ourselves during the holidays. It is healthy and acceptable to say no to some opportunities that stretch us too far and deplete us of energy. We must practice self-care and fill our own well or reserve tanks in order to be able to give to others. Doing nurturing things for our spirits and bodies can be helpful. A massage, a bath, that brisk walk, a meditation, a manicure, a Reiki session, yoga class or even a day trip to a spa can help us refocus. By taking care of ourselves we are better equipped to be present in the here and now for others too.

A LECSA annual reminder: More than half of all the alcohol consumed in the United States during the entire year occurs from Thanksgiving to New Years. If you plan on driving be certain to make any driving related decisions prior to ingesting any amount of alcohol. HAPPY YEAR!