Routines *(keep these as priorities so we can better deal with stress)*

1. **Adequate sleep**—energy lags, moods may suffer and our ability to be pleasant or productive suffers when we fail to protect our sleep.

2. **Exercise**—dressing warmly and going for a walk is within our reach on most days. If you have a workout schedule, make it a priority.

3. **Stay connected with positive support systems**—those folks who add positive energy to our life and with whom we can be honest.

4. **Adhere to medication routine**—set up reminder systems to remember to pack meds if traveling and cues to take them if our schedules are disrupted. Check to see if a refill is needed in time to get it filled.

5. **Debt**—plan carefully for holiday spending.

6. **Control chaos**—take time to clean as we go to make cooking and wrapping gifts more efficient.

7. **Remember vitamins, nutrients and healthy eating**—our bodies run best on appropriate fuel.

8. **Stays hydrated**—in the midst of the busy times, remember to drink plenty of water.

9. **Wash your hands often**—this is still an effective weapon in preventing a case of the flu.

**Thinking and Planning Ahead**

10. **Plan ahead**—anticipate challenging situations and enlist creative strategies from family members involved.

11. **Lower expectations**—review our assumptions of what we want happen; lower them a few notches.

12. **Verbalize expectations**—it is difficult to abandon *all* expectations, but take stock to see if the expectations are: 1) realistic and 2) communicated to others who will be affected.

13. **Enlist the help of your doctor**—A medication adjustment *prior* to the holiday rush might allow us to more effectively manage the stress of the holidays.

14. **Set goals**—list some simple things to accomplish each day; celebrate when we can cross one off.

15. **Allow others their traditions**—extend to loved ones the right to experience old and new ways of observing what has meaning for them.

16. **Choose small celebrations**—volunteering or attending a smaller worship service or party may be more calming than larger extravagant events.

17. **Plan ahead, create a list and communicate specific ways guests and family members can help us.** There’s no need to suffer in silence; our loved ones aren’t mind readers. Now we only have to remember where we put the list.

18. **Have patience**—holidays are a seasonal journey and the sign says, “Anticipate delays.” Try to keep perspective if vehicle repairs or weather disrupt plans.

19. **Don’t put all your eggs in one basket**—choose several things you hope to enjoy during the season and adjust as necessary.

20. **Compromise**—a willingness to give up part of what you want to can go a long way to create goodwill.

21. **Allow people to have less enthusiasm than you**—avoid insisting everyone love the holidays as much as you do.

22. **Go over the schedule**—those involved may appreciate knowing what to expect and check to see if the plans work for everyone.

23. **Think ahead RE: noise/activity levels with gifts you buy for children**—musical instrument, toy with a siren, or magical sword might not be the ideal gift when you are spending time with lots of people. Consider waiting until after the family gathering to give such noisy/active gifts to children who will want to play with them right away.

24. **Wrap gifts in no cost paper**—sale fliers, magazine catalogue pages, plain side of paper bags, old road maps. This can some money and help the environment. Leave off bows; write the names right on the paper. Ribbons and tags don’t get lost when packing gifts for travel.
25. As a family give to a favorite charity. Work together to save for and plan purchases for others less fortunate.

26. Be intentional about extended family giving. Discuss whether to continue the tradition with all adults.

27. Anticipate and allow for feelings of grief. Holidays often mark remembering losses of loved ones, relationships, health, dreams or other major parts of our lives. Some faith communities have special “Blue Christmas” to help with this.

28. Pray or meditate, as your beliefs allow—connecting with sources of spiritual support helps many cope with stress and can cultivate a sense of peaceful wonder during the season.

**Choices for the Day of Celebration for Hosts and Guests**

29. Create a quiet room—designate one room as a retreat where guests can go to recharge/rest/read quietly during the chaos of a large gathering.

30. Rent a room—if staying at a family member’s home for the holiday causes stress, reserve a room at a nearby motel.

31. Fake it ‘till you make it—sometimes we find our attitudes become more positive as we practice and “act sociable.”

32. Take a walk—alone or as a group; it can help us to relax and stay more pleasant.

33. Check the weather forecast—you can take a walk in almost any weather if you take an umbrella, raincoat, dress warmly and wear boots, gloves and hat as needed.

34. Lend a hand—offering to help the hosts and volunteering to support those less fortunate strengthen our ability to consider the needs of others, too.

35. Ask for help—request assistance to head off irritation and resentment.

36. Provide activities for guests—board games or puzzles often help folks feel less pressure to excel in conversation but still enjoy being together. Special activities or space for children may help.

37. Let others be right—instead of arguing with family members, close the discussion with an honest, “You gave me something to think about—you might be right. Thank you for calling that perspective to my attention.”

38. Detach—allow other adults’ behavior to reflect on them while accepting your behavior reflects on you. You may love someone but you are still two different people.

39. Practice acceptance—accept the unexpected will happen; shift to solution mode, “What’s realistically possible now?”

40. Accept fuzzy logic—some parts of the holidays aren’t rational, and some of the guests won’t be either. It doesn’t have to spoil our celebration. We don’t have to be in charge of correcting anyone’s thinking, religion or politics.

41. Remember parties are supposed to be fun—they are optional.

42. Practice recovery friendly hosting—many people prefer not to drink alcohol or need to avoid it due to medical situations. Offer a variety of non-alcoholic, decaffeinated options so all feel welcome. Some folks who are avoiding alcohol may feel more comfortable if the hosts avoid alcohol for at least the first half of the party.

43. Bring your own healthy beverage or food item—not every host may be aware of your special diet or drink considerations. Choose to bring a beverage or food that feels celebratory to YOU and bring it along.

44. Park your car a block away—this way you can enjoy the walk; if you or a family member needs to leave, it will be easy to exit without asking others to move their cars. YOU DON’T HAVE TO STAY FOR THE ENTIRE CELEBRATION.

45. Reframe—be appreciative and positive about the time family members can be together, instead of dwelling on the time they can’t.

46. Spread out the celebration—it’s a season not just one day. Consider some small low-key gatherings to enjoy leftovers and ease out the holiday pace gradually. Some people miss the holidays when they are over.

47. Admit powerlessness—it’s not in our control to create the perfect holiday or always be the perfect guest.

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NAMI Columbia Monthly meetings for consumers of mental health services and their family members meets the second Monday of each month, 6:30PM at The Unity Center, 1600 W. Broadway, Columbia MO Call for more info during office hours 8AM-5PM 573-874-2402

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