

Inspire - Affirm - Engage



The Holidays in 2020

The end of 2020 marks the end of an unforgettable year in what we as a community have dealt with and the incredible amount of pressure and stresses so many of you have been weathering.

This is usually a time of celebration and a chance to look forward into the new year. How do we come together this year, of all years? The theme of this season's newsletter is a focus on **gratitude**. No matter your circumstances, the trials you have been or are going through, we can still come together and recognize the love that we have for our families, our friends, our community, and especially, for ourselves and the journey towards our health that we chose.

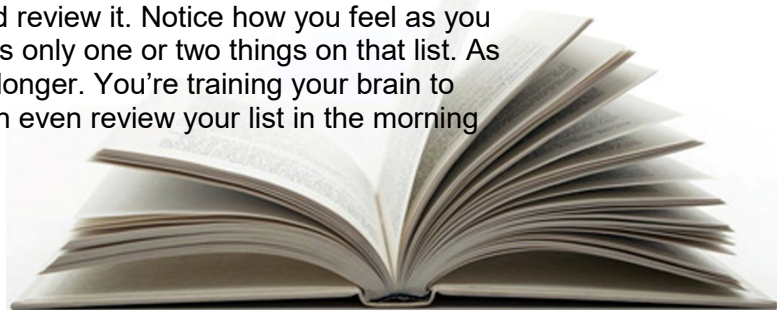
Wishing you and yours health and safety this holiday season!

-Janet Ng, PhD and Carmela Pontillo, RN, MSN, CBN

Gratitude

This year has been stressful to say the least. One of the most potent ways to counter stress is to focus on the things that *are* working. Maybe it's those extra moments in the middle of a work-from-home, school-from-home that you can be with your family that you wouldn't otherwise have. Or maybe it's being able to move more easily now after surgery compared to before surgery. Or being able to put a meal together that tastes good and meets your health goals for yourself, just today.

Research has shown that a daily gratitude practice improves our mood and makes us feel more capable in handling the next day. How to work this practice in? You can sit down at the end of the day and write down the things you were thankful for, no matter how small you may think it was. Make that list and review it. Notice how you feel as you are looking at it. The first few times, maybe there's only one or two things on that list. As you continue to do this each day, that list will get longer. You're training your brain to notice more and more of those moments. You can even review your list in the morning and see how you feel going about your day.



Support Groups

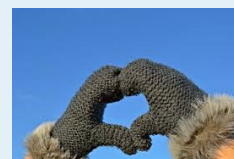
Support groups for both Overlake and Kaiser Permanente programs are now virtual! Reach out to your respective program for more information on how to sign up.

Overlake Program Clinic

1-425-467-3957

Kaiser Permanente Program Clinic

1-425-502-3454, option 3



Acknowledge the Loss

Gratitude doesn't mean you are supposed to be happy all the time. It doesn't mean that you are supposed to ignore the losses that you or others have experienced. Gratitude and loss can coexist, and it is okay to have these mixed feelings.

Take time to let yourself grieve what has changed and what has been lost. Ignoring what has happened—whether it is the loss of a loved one, the loss of the way of life as it used to be, the loss of a job, or the loss of an expected vacation—can lead to a pressure cooker of intense feelings that may eventually spill over.

Grief is not a linear process. It is more like a roller coaster and there will be times when you feel okay and other times where you feel the sadness and anger hit you like a punch in the guts. When you find yourself in grief, remember to take a moment for yourself and find comfort in an activity that helps you bring down the intensity of those emotions: deep breathing, listening to music, reading, going for a quick walk, talking with a friend. Make a list of activities that you like to do so you can pull it out when you feel at a loss of how to cope.



Remember that your sadness is valid. It is easy for us to compare ourselves to someone who has it harder and for us to feel less deserving of support or validation because we are “not as bad off” as someone else. Let us be the ones to remind you: your stresses and grief are affecting you and your life. No matter what it is, you are still deserving of support just like any other person. Taking care of yourself means knowing that you are worthy of getting and receiving help.

Staying in Touch

Part of acknowledging loss is knowing that our celebrations are going to look different until we can safely gather again (we're looking at you, 2021). Here are ways to maintain connection this season until that time:

- ❖ Connect virtually! Maybe an entire meal can feel daunting, but schedule time to connect with friends and family with a specific focus in mind- maybe for cooking decorating, at the beginning of the meal, or to play a virtual game like bingo, Jeopardy, trivia, or watching the same movie at the same time. There are many ideas you can find online.
- ❖ Take a socially distanced, masked walk outside in your neighborhood, park, or trail where you know there are not as popular or when you can avoid more popular times.
- ❖ Car train to drive by and say hi to loved ones. For those with trouble with technology or have a special anniversary/birthday/event, you can arrange a drive by with your loved one at the front door/sidewalk so that they can still see family/friends. Have each car make a sign or playing holiday music as you wave. Remember to keep those masks on and to stay socially distanced.
- ❖ Potluck a meal. You can arrange which part of the meal each person will cook and drop off those portions at each other's doorstep so that everyone can still share in those family recipes and meals cooked by loved ones without gathering.
- ❖ Send those notes and cards. Technology has made it so much easier for us to connect, but people still love receiving thoughtful notes and cards in the mail. Take time to express to someone how much they mean to you. Holiday cards to residents in senior living communities are also greatly appreciated by residents and can be a thoughtful family activity.