The Holidays Reimagined

Ellen Clark, LCSW

Like the rest of 2020, this holiday season will be like no other. It will be a time of reflection and reinvention. Though things will be different, it can inspire us to find new paths toward purpose, meaning, and hope. Some additional positives might be less hustle and bustle, less trying to live up to an idealized version of the holidays, and as a result, potentially less stress.

As pandemic fatigue wears on, we enter this holiday season tired of uncertainty and seeking threads of normal. Now with additional burdens and challenges, many of our traditions may be off the table completely. You may not be able to visit family, take pictures with Santa, attend parties, religious services, and/or other special events. For some, the holidays may be a painful reminder of loss, symbolized by empty chairs at the table. For others, the loss of jobs and financial security puts the whole idea of celebrating out of reach.

Writer, Sarah Begley, recently wrote about the upcoming holiday season saying “we can seize this unwanted opportunity to reimagine everything, to tell a new story about what the season of togetherness means for our country, homes, and our relationships. In a time that requires distance, we can find new modes of closeness. In a year of austerity, we can rethink the purpose of wealth. In a period of great uncertainty, we can decide what is most meaningful about shared ritual.” This brings to mind one of my mother’s favorite childhood stories. It was about how our family celebrated Christmas during the great depression, another time of uncertainty, insecurity, and deprivation. She recalled her parents collecting discarded pine boughs, putting them in a vase, and decorating them with things around the house, because they could not afford a tree at the holidays. She also told how her father made deer hoof prints in the snow to delight the family on Christmas Day. My mother recalled those memories as one of her fondest childhood experiences. This year, we encourage you to be inspired to new and amended traditions, so your holiday season is meaningful and safe.

Work/Life Connection-EAP counselors are available to assist you if you need support through this difficult time. Just call 615.936.1327 for a confidential appointment.
Give the Gift of Civility

The holiday season traditionally means that families, friends, and communities gather to share celebrations and good cheer. This year, our get-togethers may be smaller or socially distanced. Sadly, goodwill may be a challenge following a polarizing national election, regardless of the outcome. The political divide has challenged many parts of our lives, including our faith in reported news or social media posts, our families and friendships, and our world view. This, along with COVID-19, the economic downturn, the spotlight on racial injustices, and uncertainty has had a negative impact on our mental health and well-being. With the unprecedented events of 2020, there has been an uptick in anxiety, helplessness, and depression.

Here are seven things we can do to regain our own power and control over attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and in our communities.

1. Commit to being respectful.
2. Accept that good people can have different ideas.
3. Give up the idea that you will change someone’s set beliefs through your social meme or post.
4. Don’t make personal attacks and name-calling when you are conversing about ideas.
5. Since communication is about the words we say, the tone we use, and our body demeanor, be intentional about being open to hearing others. Listen to understand another’s point of view instead of trying to change it.
6. Taking some deep breaths before responding can help you think before you say something hurtful that you may regret.
7. Focus on maintaining the relationship and resolving the issue rather than being right.

According to dictionary definitions, civility refers to politeness, respect, and courtesy in behavior or speech. As human beings, we are all winners if we collectively resolve in 2021 to be more kind and respectful. This would be a great way to ring in the new year with some well-being through more civility.

I Am Vanderbilt celebrates the people of Vanderbilt and the unique talents and contributions they bring to their work at the University each day.

Alyssa Aloyo, a program coordinator in the Provost’s Office for Inclusive Excellence, has found herself wearing many hats over the past year since joining that small and dedicated team. Along with her colleagues in OIE, she works on strategic planning, program development, and cultivating relationships with others across the university who are committed to equity, inclusion, and belonging at Vanderbilt.

“My favorite aspect of the job is getting to meet and being in community with so many people from many backgrounds, experiences, and expertise,” Aloyo said. “Serving as a connector between different campus areas excites me when I’m in rooms with people from opposite disciplines.”

Aloyo contributes to campus life not only as a staff member, but also as a student. She is in her final year of a master’s degree program in Learning, Diversity, and Urban Studies at Vanderbilt Peabody College.

“I believe I lean into Vanderbilt’s mission by leveraging conversations centered on the experiences of systemically non-dominant identities and communities, including my own, to advocate and pursue a more inclusive and equitable campus environment and institutional experience,” she said. “The ways I service Vanderbilt’s community and society at large include my dedication to empowering students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty to be engaged and involved in creating environments where everyone is seen, valued, and can thrive.”

Like for many of us, coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term remote work, and social and political unrest have been challenging for Aloyo, who says she’s learned to be forgiving of herself and attentive to her needs. Spending time with her black Lab, Apollo, getting as much fresh air and sunshine as possible, and weekly check-ins with her therapist help her process and heal.

“I uphold a strong commitment to myself and my well-being,” she said. “When my body tells me it’s tired, I rest with no questions or push to do something else. Although I may feel guilty or unproductive at times, I know that the best decision for me is what my body is telling me it needs.”

– Kara Furlong
Occupational Health Clinic talk:

Thyroid Awareness

R. Duke Chenault, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC

January is Thyroid Awareness Month. According to the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, more than 30 million Americans will develop thyroid disease at some point during their lifetime and 60% of these individuals don’t even know it. Here are a few signs that could indicate you need to have your thyroid checked:

- Unexplained weight changes
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Insomnia
- Heart palpitations or racing
- Depression or anxiety
- Body aches

Lindsay Bischoff, MD, the medical director of the Vanderbilt Thyroid Center reminds us that “thyroid disease can be due to a structural problem, like a nodule, or a functional problem, like hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism. The vast majority of thyroid nodules are benign and a simple physical exam by your primary care doctor to screen for nodules is important. Thyroid function problems are found by checking a blood test. It is important to remember that symptoms from thyroid disease are not specific to the thyroid and it is best to discuss your symptoms with your primary care doctor for a complete evaluation based on your symptoms.” If you have any of these symptoms, risk factors, or think you may be experiencing thyroid problems, schedule an appointment with your primary care physician or one of our VUMC endocrinologists for further evaluation.

Care Gap Alerts

Cervical Cancer

(continued from page 1)

Most patients who develop cervical cancer have not had routine cervical cancer screening. Patients with early stage cervical cancer often have abnormal vaginal bleeding symptoms such as bleeding after intercourse. Patients with more advanced stage cervical cancer will also have more pelvic pain. Patients with such symptoms should have a pelvic exam and any abnormal lesions noted on the cervix should be biopsied to confirm the diagnosis.

Are there any warning signs or risk factors for cervical cancer?

Lifestyle risk factors for cervical cancer include smoking, early age of sexual activity, and multiple sex partners. Patients with genital warts and other sexually transmitted diseases also have an increased risk of cervical cancer. Lastly, patients who are chronically immunosuppressed (i.e., HIV infected, transplant) are also at risk.

How can women reduce their risk for cervical cancer?

First, girls and boys should get the HPV vaccine preferably between ages 11 and 12. This is perhaps the most effective way to reduce their risk of cervical cancer and other HPV associated cancers. Young girls and women should avoid smoking and high-risk sexual behavior. Lastly, women should adhere to previously discussed guidelines regarding cervical cancer screening.
Carpe Annum! Seize the Year!
6 Keys to a Re-energized 2021

2020 has been quite a year, and many of us are looking forward to 2021 with a renewed sense of vigor! Begin the new year re-energized by taking action in these six areas!

6 Keys to an Energized Year!
- Eat for Energy
- Get Active
- Be Smoke-Free
- Get Enough Sleep
- Live with Less Stress
- Work Toward a Healthy Weight

Each newsletter issue in 2021 will focus on one of the six keys. In this issue, we focus on the first key: Eat for Energy!

Diabetes Prevention Program
New Sessions This Winter!

Health Plus will begin new sessions, offered remotely, of the National Diabetes Prevention Program for faculty, staff, or spouses with pre-diabetes or a history of gestational diabetes. The Diabetes Prevention Program is proven to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.

There is no charge for this one-year program that provides consistent follow-up to help participants maintain healthy lifestyle changes and have fun along the way. Visit bit.ly/healthplusdpp to learn more.

Hold the Stuffing

Enjoy good health this holiday season:
- Enjoy holiday foods in MODERATION
- With appropriate PORTION SIZE
- And engage in regular PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Final Weigh-In January 4 to 15.
View the full details at bit.ly/healthplushts.
Ask a Lifestyle Coach

Q I want to be healthier in the new year. How can I make my goals stick?

A Start the new year S.M.A.R.T.!

A new year is a great time for creating new goals. And when setting your goals, it’s best to make them S.M.A.R.T! Setting goals that are simple and straightforward will help you move forward with confidence.

Think about a goal you would like to set this year. Using the examples and SMART goal infographic, what details can you add to your goal?

Typical Goal: I will exercise more.
SMART Goal: I will walk for 20 minutes, 5 days a week.

Typical Goal: I will stop drinking sodas.
SMART Goal: I will cut back to only one soda a week.

You’ve set your SMART goal — Now what?
• Post your SMART goal in an area where you will see it often (ex: bathroom mirror, refrigerator, office space, cell phone screen, etc.).
• Set aside time each week to assess your progress and make adjustments when needed.
• Think of your plan as an experiment; if something isn’t working, either tweak it or try something else.

Lifestyle coaching offers help setting SMART goals and accountability to help you succeed with them. To work one-on-one with a Lifestyle Coach complete the form at bit.ly/healthpluscoach.

Cauliflower and Chickpea Masala

Serves 4

Ingredients:
Masala Spice Mix
• 2 Tbsp. garam masala
• 1/2 tsp. cumin
• 1/2 tsp. turmeric
• 1/2 tsp. smoked paprika
• 1/4 tsp. cayenne
• 1/2 tsp. salt
• Freshly cracked pepper

Skillet Ingredients
• 1 yellow onion
• 3 cloves garlic
• 1/2 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger
• 2 Tbsp. olive oil
• 12 oz. frozen cauliflower florets
• 1 (15 oz.) can chickpeas, drained
• 1 (15 oz.) can tomato sauce
• 1/4 cup water
• 1/2 cup coconut milk
• Salt to taste

Directions:
1. In a small bowl, combine the spices for the masala spice mix.
2. Finely dice onion, mince garlic, and grate ginger. Add all three to a large skillet along with olive oil and sauté over medium heat until onions are soft and translucent (about 3 minutes). Add spice mix and continue to sauté for one more minute.
3. Add frozen cauliflower florets to skillet, and continue to sauté for about 5 minutes, or until cauliflower have thawed through and are coated in spices.
4. Add drained chickpeas, tomato sauce, and 1/4 cup water to skillet. Stir to combine, then allow to simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. If mixture becomes too dry as it simmers, add 2 more tablespoons water.
5. Turn off heat and stir in coconut milk. Add salt as needed. Serve in a bowl either over rice or with a piece of bread for dipping.

Nutrition Information per serving: Serving Size 1 1/4 cups
Calories 307 | Carbohydrates 33g | Protein 9.5g
Fat 16.5g | Sodium 1153mg | Fiber 10.5g

Source: budgetbytes.com/easy-cauliflower-and-chickpea-masala
Human Resources is excited to announce our health provider, Aetna, now offers televideo counseling services. Our health plan already gives you access to trained professionals for counseling, but it’s not always easy to find the time to talk with someone. Add in a global pandemic and it can seem impossible to get in to see someone when you need help.

Televideo services, gives you a chance to meet with someone on your schedule. Whatever you’re facing, you have the same support: psychiatrists, social workers, marriage counselors, and more. Televideo makes it easier than ever to access services. A behavioral health televideo session will cost the same as a face-to-face office visit.

**Connect with ease**
No travel, referrals, or downloads. Just use your webcam with any web-connected device.

**Face-to-face in your space**
Just like being in the same room, you and your provider can see each other’s faces as you talk. Have your sessions wherever you’re most comfortable, at home or while traveling.

**Same person, every time**
Get one provider that gets you. No readjusting to someone new. You can build comfort, so your care stays on track. Feel the confidence to express your feelings. It’s confidential, safe, and secure.

**Your time, your choice**
You choose when, where, and how you meet. There’s no travel or traffic. Just more flexibility to fit in your life, how you like it.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live in:</th>
<th>Call:</th>
<th>To schedule an appointment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any state</td>
<td>MDLive</td>
<td>Toll-free: 1.855.824.2170 or go to <a href="http://www.mdlive.com/BHCOMM">www.mdlive.com/BHCOMM</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>California, Colorado, Delaware, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia</td>
<td>Inpathy</td>
<td>Toll-free: 1.800.442.8938</td>
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<tr>
<td>All other states</td>
<td>Arcadian Telepsychiatry</td>
<td>Toll-free: 1.866.991.2103</td>
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upcoming events

Know Your Numbers
Go to bit.ly/healthpluskyn for in-person and digital options. Know Your Numbers counts as one action in Step 2 of Go for the Gold: Wellness Actions Log!

Hold the Stuffing
Go to bit.ly/healthplushts for details on January’s final weigh-in.

Babies & You
Go to bit.ly/healthplusbabies for updated scheduling.

FLUla-2-Uza!
Go to vumc.org/health-wellness/employee-influenza-vaccine-program for details on where to get your employee flu shot this year.

Healthier You Presentations
Go to bit.ly/healthplushealthieryou to view monthly presentations.
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*Thyroid Awareness* with R. Duke Chenault, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC

*Ask a Lifestyle Coach* with Rachel Bowman, CHES

Have a topic you want to see covered? Email us at health.wellness@vumc.org.

Follow us on Twitter @twitter.com/WellVanderbilt

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Babies & You is just one example of how Health Plus expanded virtual offerings to help even more people access our programs and services during the pandemic! Babies & You is a prenatal health promotion program for faculty/staff, spouses, and/or dependent children who become pregnant. The program provides monthly educational opportunities via Zoom including topics like breastfeeding, nutrition, newborn care, and more. Visit [bit.ly/healthplusbabies](bit.ly/healthplusbabies) to enroll and learn more.