

Nurses living mindfully— Over the holidays and always

By Karen Gabel Speroni, PhD, RN, BSN, MHSA

12 gifts to yourself for happier, healthier holidays.

THE INSTITUTE for Healthcare Improvement's Triple Aim is to improve population health, increase patient satisfaction, and reduce per-capita spending. The Quadruple Aim adds the goal of improving healthcare providers' work life. This holiday season, "gift" yourself with self-care techniques to ensure the best care for patients and families and to promote effective inter-professional work environments.

- Gift 1—Be present/live present.** Be aware of this moment and examine your thoughts. Create reminders for being present before you interact with patients, families, and colleagues.
- Gift 2—Practice deep breathing.** Notice the calm it brings. Establish journal clubs to review the evidence on deep-breathing techniques.
- Gift 3—Practice meditation.** Create a space of stillness in your mind to just be. Plan meditation classes or book clubs in your organization.
- Gift 4—Observe your thoughts without judgment or reaction.** Pause before you react. Use the STOP protocol (Stop, think, observe, plan). Will your thoughts control you or will you control your thoughts?
- Gift 5—Practice empathy.** Start by accepting and loving yourself. Remove judgment. Recognize that you never know what may be happening in the lives of others, including your patients, families, and colleagues.
- Gift 6—Find a peaceful place.** Create a physical space to relax; add essential oils (such as frankincense, lavender, or rose) and gentle ocean music.
- Gift 7—Eat and drink healthy over the holidays.** Before you succumb to that holiday treat, be mindful of why you want it. Are you hungry, does your body need energy, or is it an emotional treat? Be mindful of consuming healthy foods and drinks in moderation.
- Gift 8—Host a healthy holiday work party.** Serve healthy foods; imagine a bowl of red and green

apples, a vegetable platter, black bean brownies, and water infused with fresh colorful fruit and basil leaves. Explore how to make holiday traditions healthier.

- Gift 9—Volunteer.** Collaborate with colleagues to donate needed items or volunteer for an important cause.
- Gift 10—Increase physical activity.** A brisk walk after a meal with a friend or family member may give you peaceful energy you didn't even know you could have. Before you succumb to being sedentary or less active, be mindful of why. Are you physically or emotionally exhausted? A balance of healthy food and activity is good for the body and soul. Plan a holiday run or walk event with your colleagues.
- Gift 11—Practice yoga.** New to yoga? Take a class for beginners.
- Gift 12—Practice gratitude.** Treasure each moment—time on this earth is a true gift and of unknown quantity. Evaluate your stressors and whether they will matter in a few days, months, or years. Most aren't worth the momentary stress. Have gratitude for the good in each moment.

Happy, healthy holidays

The lyrics to *12 Days of Christmas* have inspired creative ways to health, including *The 12 Ways to Health* holiday song from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/family/holiday/12ways.htm). One great way to health is to join the American Nurses Association's Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation Grand Challenge at healthynursehealthynation.org. And consider sharing your 12 self-care gifts or techniques to help you and your colleagues live mindfully this holiday season. Cheers to healthy, mindful nurses leading our nation. ★

Karen Gabel Speroni is a consultant and educator at the American Nurses Association, Nursing Knowledge Center.

Selected references

- Bodenheimer T, Sinkov C. From triple to quadruple aim: Care of the patient requires care of the provider. *Ann Fam Med*. 2014;12(6):573-6.
- Fruits & Veggies More Matters. Healthy meal planning. fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/healthy-meal-planning-with-fruits-and-vegetables
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement. The IHI Triple Aim. ihi.org/Engage/Initiatives/TripleAim/pages/default.aspx