

"Make sure something you're striving for is something that you actually love. If not, it isn't worth it."

- Naomi Watts

I love this quote because if nothing else, it's truth. I love wellness and helping people get and stay well naturally. If I didn't, I wouldn't spend as much time as I do researching topics I think are important and relevant. The holidays are upon us and for those of us who have lost loved ones, the holidays become something we dread, not something we celebrate. So I thought this was a good time to talk about how to beat the holiday blues. I wish all of you out there a very Merry Christmas and an amazing new year.

Yours in health,



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How to Beat the Holiday Blues



I'll admit. The holidays are tough. Most of my family has been taken from me, which is why I cherish those friends who are my family. But still, when everyone around you is spending time with loved ones and you aren't, it's a tough time. As much as I miss my dad and my brother, I miss them more now, when everyone around me is surrounded by family they care about. But here's how I plan to get through it. I hope it helps you.

1. Take time off work. If you're like me, you probably have use-or-lose vacation. I have a whole bunch of days left and I plan to use every single one of them. As I write this newsletter, I'm thinking about all the things I want to accomplish before the end of the year. I'm turning off my work phone and completely taking a break and doing what I want to do.
2. Decide to be healthy. It's easy to overindulge during the holidays.....whether it's with food or alcohol. If you have an extra dessert or drink, spend an extra 30 minutes exercising. It doesn't have to be anything crazy... a 30 minute walk will do wonders for your physical and emotional health.
3. Be realistic. Your needs, wants and traditions can change as life changes. If you start to feel overwhelmed, know that it's ok to say "NO.". You'll be glad that you did,
4. Be willing to acknowledge your feelings. Be true to yourself. If you feel like crying, do it. Don't worry about what others think. Try to focus on things that are meaningful to you. My brother died 11 days before Christmas. I can choose to let that haunt me or choose to celebrate the life he chose to live.
5. Pay attention to change. If you or someone you care about is struggling, having a hard time sleeping, drinking too much or losing interest in things they use to love, something is wrong. Don't be afraid to ask someone what's up. People in pain often hope that someone notices something is wrong. Be the friend who notices.

6. Make healthy choices. Decide to eat a diet that's healthy. Decide to get a good night's sleep. Stay away from cigarettes and drink alcohol in moderation. Avoid prescription medication and find the CAUSE of what's wrong with you instead of treating the SYMPTOM.
7. Formulate a budget. A lot of people go overboard at Christmas and then they pay the price later. Set a budget for yourself and stick to it. The last thing you want to do is spend more money than you have. You'll regret it and stress about it when you get that next bill.
8. Tell people you love how you feel about them. We often assume that people in our lives know how we feel. And they might. But take the time to tell them that you love them. They may know that you do, but hearing those words come out of your mouth will probably mean more than you'll ever know. Besides, you never know when today may be the last day that you have with them. If someone you love calls you, return that call. If someone you love tells you they love you, tell them you love them back. I'm so thankful that I returned my brother's call and talked to him the night before he died. I'd have never forgiven myself if I hadn't returned his call.

The bottom line is this. For those of us without much of a family, the holidays are tough. But we must stop and take a look around at those people who have come into our lives. There's a reason. Friends are the family we get to CHOOSE. Most of my family is gone, but I'm so blessed to have some amazing friends who have made their family a part of mine. Through others in my circle, I'm not only a mom to my own son, but a step-mom and step-grandparent to my boyfriend's family. Luke and I are no longer alone. We have a vast circle of family we got to choose. We have people in our lives who love us for who we are....not for who we were born to be. So the holidays are truly a time to be thankful. Families don't always fit into a prearranged box. They fit into who we choose them to be. On this Christmas holiday, I'm sad for the loss of my brother and my dad, but I'm so thankful for my son and the friends and family I got to choose to be part of our lives.

Have a wonderful month, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

How to Brew the Perfect Cup of Tea

There is an art to brewing tea using loose tea leaves, but once you find your "sweet spot" you may never go back to bagged tea again. Here are a few simple guidelines for making the "perfect" cup of tea:

1. Bring water to a boil in a tea kettle (avoid using a [non-stick pot](#), as they too can release harmful chemicals when heated)
2. Preheat your tea pot or cup to prevent the water from cooling too quickly when transferred. Simply add a small amount of boiling water to the pot or tea cup that you're going to steep the tea in. Ceramic and porcelain retain heat well. Then cover the pot or cup with a lid. Add a tea cozy if you have one, or drape with a towel. Let stand until warm, then pour out the water
3. Put the tea into an infuser, strainer, or add loose into the tea pot. Steeping without an infuser or strainer will produce a more flavorful tea. Start with one heaped teaspoon per cup of tea, or follow the instructions on the tea package. The robustness of the flavor can be tweaked by using more or less tea
4. Add boiling water. Use the correct amount for the amount of tea you added (i.e. for four teaspoons of tea, add four cups of water). The ideal water temperature varies based on the type of tea being steeped:
 1. **White or green teas** (full leaf): Well below boiling (170-185 F or 76-85 C). Once the water has been brought to a boil, remove from heat and let the water cool for about 30 seconds for white tea and 60 seconds for green tea before pouring it over the leaves
 2. **Oolongs** (full leaf): 185-210 F or 85-98 C
 3. **Black teas** (full leaf) and **Pu-erhs**: Full rolling boil (212 F or 100 C)
5. Cover the pot with a cozy and let steep. Follow steeping instructions on the package. If there are none, here are some general steeping guidelines. Taste frequently as you want it to be flavorful but not bitter:
 0. **Oolong teas**: 4-7 minutes
 1. **Black teas**: 3-5 minutes
 2. **Green teas**: 2-3 minutes
6. Once desired flavor has been achieved you need to remove the strainer or infuser. If using loose leaves, pour the tea through a strainer into your cup and any leftover into another vessel (cover with a cozy to retain heat)