

WIC WELLNESS WORKS

Holiday

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Employee Packet



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SURVIVAL GUIDE

Here come the holidays – are you having fun yet? Crowded malls with non-existent parking spaces, trips to the airport to pick up relatives, and the constant parade of cookies and turkey out of your oven can translate into one reaction: “Bah humbug!” The winter holidays may be the season of giving and celebration, but they can also be the season of, “Wake me when it’s over.” Fortunately, we have a lot of control over just how much “Fa, la, la, la, la!” versus “Bah humbug!” we let into our lives. With a little planning and a positive attitude, we can relax more and stress less... and that may be the very best gift the holiday season has to offer!

Move your holiday experience away from the Grinch and toward *It’s a Wonderful Life* with the WWW Holiday Survival Guide!

Check out these survival sections:

- **Money Management** – “Help! My Piggy Bank is Almost Empty!”
- **Time Management** – Rockin’ Around the Clock
- **Keeping the Spirit** – Giving and Receiving Kindness
- **Healthy Food Choices** – “It took a lot of will power but I finally gave up dieting.”
- **Physical Activity** – “If only exercise was as satisfying as chocolate.”

Have fun and have a swell holiday!

The UT- Austin Wellness Team

P.S. **WIC Wellness Works** got a makeover!
We hope you enjoy our fresh new look
in the coming year.



Money Management:

Help! My Piggy Bank is Almost Empty!

First things first – the holidays can be expensive. Really expensive! So let's start right there in reducing some holiday stress. A quick way to put some money back in your pocket is to plan before you spend. This allows you to buy what you need, avoid waste, and feel in greater control of your money.

Survival Tip #1:

Know where your holiday dollars are going

- **First, discuss expectations.** Discuss what the holidays are really about with your family. Ask them to help brainstorm ways of giving, receiving, and celebrating that focus more on what is truly meaningful to your family and community, and less on “cha-ching” (see gift tips and “family fun” below).
- **Set spending limits.** Write down your typical spending categories during the holiday season (groceries, eating out, gift giving, decorating, etc). Then, list an amount that you feel comfortable spending for each category. Try to be as realistic as possible. Consider setting up a cash envelope system with money set aside for each category. This is a great help in avoiding holiday debt.
- **Get the best deal!** Shop store clearances and look for holiday promotions. (See **Gift Ideas** and **Healthy Eating** for more cost-savers!) If you feel comfortable buying used items, shop garage sales, thrift shops, and the websites Craigslist and E-Bay (which also has new items). Check out online sites such as overstock.com and amazon.com for better deals.
- **Monitor your spending.** The single best thing you can do to save money during the holidays is track where your money is going. Keeping your spending limit in mind, track expenses in a notebook, on a spreadsheet, or find another system that works best for you.

Survival Tip #2:

Be a Resourceful (Thrifty) Gift Giver

Who says you have to spend money to give? By using your creativity and resources at hand, you can come up with all kinds of ways to recognize the people in your life with a wonderful gift.

For the important people in your life, consider giving:

- **Homemade gifts:** Gifts you make yourself are less expensive and could mean more to the receiver than a store-bought item. Check out this website for loads of fun-to-give, easy-to-make gift ideas: stretcher.com/stories/03/03nov10b.cfm
- **Gifts of time or experience:** Consider what you could offer others in your life: babysitting, sewing lessons, help planning a garden – the possibilities are endless! Make a coupon or gift certificate to give the gift recipient. Get a free coupon template here: wordtemplates.org/certificates/free-gift-certificate-templates



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Money Management: Help! My Piggy Bank is Almost Empty!

To exchange gifts with a group, consider these ideas:

- **Host a swap.** Choose a theme (holiday decorations, cookbooks, exercise videos, kitchen tools), and ask everyone to bring a gently used or new item they would like to exchange for something else.
- **White Elephant:** A White Elephant exchange is a lighthearted way to celebrate with your colleagues at low or no cost! Everyone brings a wrapped item. Gifts can follow a particular theme (something silly, pampering, tasty, etc.) or can be anything at all. For instructions on how to hold a White Elephant exchange, visit: wikihow.com/Organize-a-White-Elephant-Gift-Exchange
- **Recipe/dish exchange:** Ask each person to bring a dish of their choice to a potluck event. Ask them to bring enough copies of their recipe to share with the group. At the end of the event, each person will have their own cookbook to take home!
- **Draw a name:** Instead of buying multiple gifts, draw names. Create/download a “wish list” that allows everyone to list a few things they would like from their “Secret Santa/Secret Holiday Pal.” Set a low dollar amount so that gifts are affordable. See a sample here: office.microsoft.com/en-in/templates/secret-santa-wish-list-2-10-00-spending-limit-TC101892024.aspx



Time Management: Rockin' around the Clock

Besides saving money, there's something else very valuable you can save this holiday season: time! Chances are, you probably feel like your time is as thin as a snowflake most of the year. Try these time management tips and “Rock Around the Clock!”

Survival Tip #3:

Rein in those Holiday Commitments!

List all the holiday-related tasks you were responsible for last year (buying/wrapping gifts, sending cards, decorating the house, hosting the annual gift exchange, etc.). Put a star next to the activities you truly enjoyed. Then, look at your list and consider the following questions:

- **Which activities could you scale back to reduce stress?** Can you buy some gifts online? Pick and choose which holiday events you attend? Volunteer to host the classroom party a different year? Can you combine or delegate errands so that you aren't out in holiday traffic as much?
- **Where can you get help to make tasks easier and more fun?** Maybe you still host the gift exchange, but you make it a potluck this time. When it's time to clean, crank up the holiday tunes and get everyone involved.
- **Which activities could you cut out altogether?** Instead of sending holiday cards through the mail, maybe you take a pass this year. Or maybe you create a simple online card to send. Whatever it is that you cut – give yourself the gift of feeling no guilt! You deserve it!
- **Which activities do you really enjoy?** For those activities that get your holiday spirit in high gear, try to clear your schedule and truly “live in the moment.” Don't attempt to multi-task and be a Seasonal Superhero. Just stop, sip the hot cocoa – and enjoy.



Keeping the Holiday Spirit: Giving and Receiving Kindness



Keeping the Spirit: Giving to Yourself

Sometimes you get so tapped out during the holidays giving to everyone else, that the last person you give to is yourself! Make it a priority to give yourself the gift of personal time and care this season.

Survival Tip #4:

Give Yourself a Break (and Kick Off Those Saddle Shoes!)

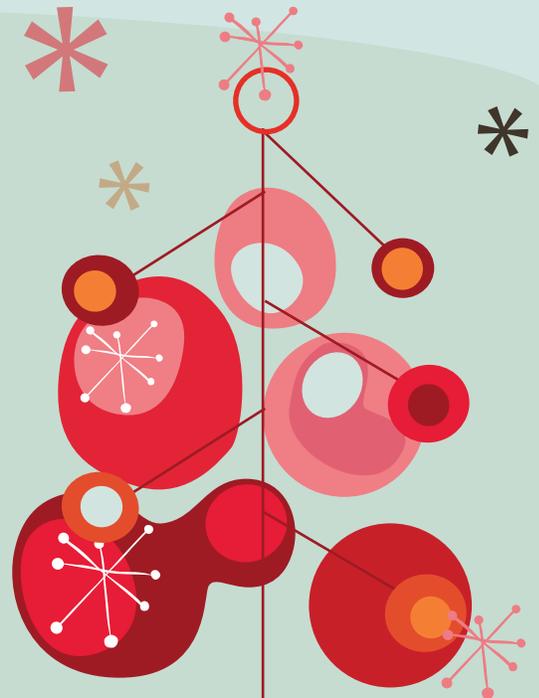
- **Schedule daily “pause” moments** to refuel your spirit and energy level!
- **Schedule some downtime to listen to quiet music** at least once a day or, welcome total silence by turning off the radio, TV, etc.
- **Give yourself five minutes each morning to wake up slowly** without jumping out of bed and into your day.
- **Spend time with someone who rejuvenates you** – or if you recharge alone, make time for a solo walk, reading a good book, taking a warm bath, etc.
- **Stop and take a few deep breaths.** This time of year, wonderful scents are all around us (think: pine, cinnamon, nutmeg). Let them be your cue to b-r-e-a-t-h-e. Studies show that a few deep breaths can slow our heart rate, lower our blood pressure, and help generate positive thoughts.

Survival Tip #5:

Take Off Your Superhero Cape!

It may feel like you need to be a superhero to survive the holidays. The funny thing is, we usually assign those “Super Expectations” to ourselves. Respect your limits... and take a breather!

- **Learn to say no to others**, and don't feel guilty about it later!
- **Try to get to bed on time.** If you're having trouble falling (or staying) asleep, put a notebook next to your bed and write down all your “to-do's.” The list will be there in the morning when you're refreshed and ready to tackle it.
- **Reward yourself with at least one “me-time” activity** during the holiday period (get your nails done, have a quiet lunch, read a good book...). Even a half hour to yourself can refuel your holiday tank!
- **Lower your expectations!** Expect the unexpected! Use your sense of humor, try to keep things in perspective, and let go of those things that are out of your control.



Keeping the Spirit: Giving to Others

Studies show that giving to others is often as good as being on the receiving end of giving. Acts of kindness not only help others, but they can lead to positive health outcomes including reduced stress, lowered blood pressure and heart rate, and greater feelings of social support and life satisfaction for the giver. Here's what you can do this season to spread kindness:

Survival Tip #6:

Give to Others – It's Good for You!

Involving your family in volunteering can be a very enjoyable experience and gives you an activity (instead of going to a crowded mall) you can do together. It's also a great reminder to your kids of what the holidays are really about: the spirit of giving. Visit your local chamber of commerce website for opportunities to volunteer in your community. Also consider adopting a "Kindness Cause" with your WIC staff. Brainstorm ways you can give back to your local community.



Healthy Food Choices:

"It took a lot of will power but I finally gave up dieting."

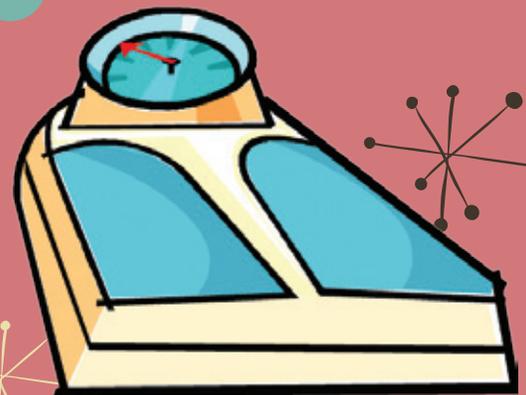
Food is an important part of many holidays, celebrations, family, and cultural traditions. As a result, many people gain a little (or a lot of) weight between Thanksgiving and the New Year. The good news is, it's not necessary to avoid festivities in an attempt to maintain your weight. Consider these tips for enjoying the holiday season without gaining weight!



Survival Tip #6:

Don't Diet! (Just Eat Healthfully)

- **Focus on weight maintenance vs. weight loss during the holidays.** If you are currently overweight and want to lose weight, this is not the time to start. Maintenance of your present weight is a big enough challenge during the holiday season.



Survival Tip #7:

Plan ahead

- **Eat a light snack before going out.** Try eating a piece of fruit, a small container of yogurt, or a string cheese before you go to a holiday party. Do the same thing before heading out to a restaurant.
- **Think ahead** about where you will be, who you will be with, what foods will be available, what foods are really special to you. Then consider your personal triggers to overeat, and how can you minimize them.
- **With a plan in hand, enjoy your food.** Before you eat, give yourself permission to enjoy the foods you want in small portions, without assigning shame or guilt to yourself.
- **Do some quick recipe research and you can reduce the fat in holiday foods that you prepare.** Magazines and websites are full of reduced calorie and reduced fat holiday recipes. Visit Cookinglight.com for healthy options.
- **Make your grocery list with the store sales flyer in hand.** Keep in mind that most stores have double-ad days where last week's and this week's sales flyers count!
- **Don't shop hungry** – this is more important this time of year than most. Store samples abound during the holidays tempting you to eat – and buy – things you hadn't planned on. Keep this in mind when heading to the mall too. Most mall food courts are loaded with high-calorie, high-fat choices. Consider packing a healthy snack in your purse.

Survival Tip #8:

Be Mindful (Eat in the Moment!)

- **Avoid recreational eating at holiday gatherings.** Make one plate of the foods you really want. Pop a mint or stick of gum in your mouth, get a tall glass of water or other low-calorie beverage and sip on it throughout the night, or position yourself away from the buffet table or food trays to keep yourself from overeating.
- **Before you drink, choose your beverages wisely.** Liquors, sweet wines, and sweet mixed drinks contain 150-450 calories per glass; water and diet sodas are calorie-free. If you choose to drink alcohol, select light wines and beers, and use non-alcoholic mixers such as water and diet soda. Limit your intake to one or two alcoholic drinks per occasion. And, watch out for calories in soda, punch, and eggnog.



Survival Tip #9:

See the Big Picture

- **Keep it in Perspective.** Overeating one day won't make or break your eating plan. It takes several days of overeating to gain weight. Return to your usual eating plan the next day without guilt or despair.
- **Set Goals.** While you don't want to diet during the holidays, setting goals is a great way to get motivated in the New Year. Take some time to reflect on the year you've just had and think about what eating (and other health) goals you would like to accomplish in the New Year. Write them down and revisit them when the holidays are over. Just knowing that you have goals down on paper will help you feel motivated.



Physical Activity During the Holidays

"If only exercise was as satisfying as chocolate."

During this hectic time of year, it is extra challenging to stay physically active. Additional work, home, and community commitments can easily take up any extra time you have to exercise. Choose some of the tips below to help you stay active as you celebrate the season.



Survival Tip #10:

All Exercise Counts toward Better Health (and It Adds Up Too!).

At Work:

- Every day in December, park your car in the furthest spot from the front door as possible.
- Use at least one or two lunch breaks a week (or more) to exercise for 10-30 minutes. Finding exercise time once you are home is more challenging!
- March in place every time you are on the phone.



While Shopping:

- Park your car in the furthest spot from the front door as possible.
- If you are shopping at a mall, walk the entire mall once before you start your shopping. Try to work in one more trip around the mall before you leave.
- Avoid walking near the food court where free samples and tempting scents often beckon!
- Use the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.

At Home:

- Right after dinner, before you clean up, walk around the block with one family member or neighbor. Rotate who you walk with each time.
- Drive to a festive neighborhood and then walk up and down the streets to look at lights instead of driving.
- Play holiday music and dance while cleaning up around the house.
- Stretch your body at the end of each day.
- March in place every time you talk on the phone at home or at work.

We hope you have found some practical tips to help you survive this busy time of year. While we are a long way from the 1950s, we hope you can at least find some time to turn up that holiday music and "Rock Around the Clock" with a smile on your face.

Have a swell holiday!