Community Institute for Psychotherapy
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2024-2025 **News & Notes**

2025 December News and Notes
Celebrating with Joy and Gratitude
By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

Celebrating with Joy and Gratitude

Plan ahead!

We may want to be everywhere and do everything during this short time – but trying to do too much can lead to burnout and exhaustion.

Don't be afraid to forgo or update even time-honored traditions when appropriate. Instead of a large formal dinner, plan a potluck brunch. Consider family plans. Activities that were fun for young children may not be as enjoyable for teens.

Personalize the Season

Holiday get-togethers offer special opportunities to engage in memory sharing with family and friends – along with wishes for the year ahead.

Story Circles create a unique opportunity to share important moments. When invitations are issued or plans made, suggest that each person bring a story or memory to share of the year gone by, perhaps written down

beforehand, or with a photo. At the gathering set aside a portion of the time for sharing.

Year-end Memory Books can be a fun and valuable family activity. Gather photos from the past year and have each member select one or more that they like and have them tell a bit about each: Where was the photo taken, what was happening, why is it a good choice for the memory book? The answers can be written down and attached to the photos. Even the youngest members can join in, and it's a good way to acknowledge accomplishments and milestones.

This activity will instill memories, develop language skills, and foster a sense of identity and belonging. Over the years, the number of books will grow, creating a lasting family chronicle.

New Year's resolutions may seem a cliché. Yet, sharing our hopes and intentions, especially with family members, can provide our loved ones (as well as ourselves) with insight into priorities and possibilities for the year ahead. Ask family members, including children, to choose one event they hope will come about in the months ahead.

Take the Stress out of the Holidays

Holidays from work and school, out of town visitors or visits, social

events, special holiday preparations and rituals, make December a time of excitement and expectation. It can also leave us vulnerable to stress, and physical and mental lows. Maintaining the balance between the ordinary and extraordinary can make the difference.

Special treats, activities, and time away from school are part of the excitement of the season, but can lead to over-stimulation. Keeping as much as possible to normal bed times, meal times, and a healthy diet is important for children. For adults, keeping up with exercise routines can also help lower stress.

Especially if this is a difficult time of year for you, seek out ways to counter low mood. Pursue activities that engage and stimulate you. Think of volunteering, taking a short getaway, or trying a new hobby. Spend time with what you love, perhaps in nature, at a museum, connecting with special friends. Don’t hesitate to reach out for help, if you need it.

Greeting the season with mindfulness, taking time for joy and gratitude for the loved ones and good things in our lives, can enhance and deepen its pleasures.

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