

Safety Newsletter



Central Region
School Insurance Group

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Winter 2024

Apps to Help Manage Stressors

- **Pacifica** – Includes mood and health tracking, mindfulness meditation, and cognitive behavior therapy. Also includes a message board to connect with others as a means of social support.
- **Headspace** – Includes a variety of meditations including “bite-sized” meditation for short time periods and “SOS” activities for when you’re feeling overwhelmed. Also, guided exercises for breathing, meditation, mindfulness and sleep
- **Breath mix** – Uses biofeedback through built in camera sensor to guide breathing (note: this app must be purchased after a free trial)
- **What’s up** – Provides activities for stress management including grounding activities, breath control, self-talk, community forums, and connections to outside resources. Also includes a personal habit section where you can keep a diary, track behaviors, and set goals.
- **Breath ball** – Guided breathing through a visual timing sequence.
- **Expense IQ Money Manager** - Set budget and financial goals, reminders for bills.
- **Remember the Milk** – Scheduling app that will integrate across all of your devices/ platforms
- **Rescue Time** - Track how you are using your time and make a plan to prioritize tasks to spend your time on.

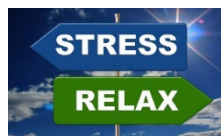
Note: this is not an exhaustive list, just a place to start!

Stressin’ Out - Stress response is a state of emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances. There are two kinds of stress,

- eustress which is from positive events (e.g. wedding, starting a new job, getting a new pet, etc.) and
- stress which is from daily life and negative events (e.g. big deadlines, food access, death in the family, etc.).

Stress Equation: Some stress is tied to an event but some stress we can manage by addressing thought/feelings. Stress management strategies:

- **Cognitive Restructuring:** Examine how you talk to yourself in stressful situations and change negative self-talk into positive talk. For example: if you find yourself stressed over a deadline and saying “I’ll never get this done in time, I’m an idiot



and should have found more time to do it earlier.” try for “I have not done this yet because I have had a lot going on but that’s okay, I will work hard on this project now and get it done.”

- **Budget:** Plan out how you want to use your time and money and stick to those plans to help relieve stress from everyday life. This could be a bullet journal, on a notepad, an electronic system, whatever works for you!
- **Get Moving:** Doing activity can reduce the stress you are feeling at the time. Regular physical activity can reduce your baseline stress levels.

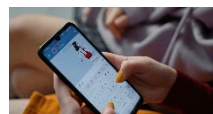
What Stress? Get Creative:

- Journaling can help lay out stressful events and responses to externalize the feelings.
- Engaging in any form of expressive art (e.g. music, acting, draw, paint, clay, etc.) can help relieve stress.
- Relaxation Strategies: There are many relaxation strategies you could try including deep breathing, mental imagery and visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, guided relaxation, biofeedback, and T’ai Chi Ch’uan.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day and alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities. Stay safe on the roads over the holidays — and every day:

- Prepare your car for winter. Keep an emergency kit.
- Get a good night’s sleep before departing – avoid drowsy driving
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled



- Put that cell phone away. Distractions occur while driving, cell phones are the main culprit
- Practice defensive driving
- Designate a sober driver. Make it home safely after a holiday party. Alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs cause impairment.

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Decorate Safely - Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency departments see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season. When decorating follow these tips from the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#):

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children and pets
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant”
- If using a live tree, cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it, and remove it from your home when it is dry
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and [choose the right ladder](#) for the task when hanging lights
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed/bare wires, or loose connections
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights, and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house



Watch Out for Fire-Starters - Candles and Fireplaces

Use of candles and fireplaces, combined with an increase in the amount of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes during the holidays, means more risk for fire. The National Fire Protection Association reports on average candles cause 46% of fires annually in December.

- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over, and out of reach of children
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out of reach of children in a locked cabinet
- Use flameless rather than lighted candles near flammable objects
- Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace
- Use a screen on the fireplace at all times when a fire is burning
- Never leave candles or fireplaces burning unattended or when you are asleep
- Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year



Turkey Fryers - Be alert to the dangers if you're thinking of celebrating the holidays by frying a turkey. The CPSC reports there have been hundreds turkey-fryer related fires, burns or other injuries, and millions of dollars in property loss from these incidents. NSC discourages the use of turkey fryers at home and urges those who prefer fried turkey to seek out professional establishments or consider using an oil-less turkey fryer. If you must fry your own turkey, follow all [Fire Administration turkey fryer guidelines](#).

Food Poisoning Is No Joke - Keep your holidays happy by handling food safely. The [foodsafety.gov](#) website from the U.S. Dept. HHS provides some valuable [holiday food safety tips](#):

- Wash your hands frequently when handling food
- Keep raw meat away from fresh produce
- Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils for uncooked and cooked meats to avoid cross-contamination
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature
- Refrigerate hot or cold leftover food within two hours of being served
- When storing turkey, cut the leftovers in small pieces so they will chill quickly
- Thanksgiving leftovers are safe for three to four days when properly refrigerated



Watch this [holiday food safety video](#)

It's Better to Give Safely - Gifts and toys should inspire joy, not cause injuries. Thousands of children are seriously injured in toy-related incidents every year. Avoid safety hazards while gifting with these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Toys are age-rated for safety, not for children's intellect and physical ability, so be sure to choose toys in the correct age range
- Choose toys for children under 3 that do not have small parts which could be choking hazards
- For children under 10, avoid toys that must be plugged into an electrical outlet
- Be cautious about toys that have button batteries or magnets, which can be harmful or fatal if swallowed
- When giving scooters and other riding toys, give the gift of appropriate safety gear, too; helmets should be worn at all times and they should be sized to fit.



To find out about holiday toy safety and recalls, check the CPSC website.