



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



‘Tis the Season of Stress

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we are talking about managing your stress during the busy holiday season.***

The holidays are here, and the joy of the season is often accompanied by a hearty helping of stress. Many of us are feeling overwhelmed by all the expectations for making this a happy season, but there are ways for us to find our Holiday Zen.

This time of year is a whirlwind of activities and holiday stress can affect everyone — even our kids. Between shopping for gifts, holiday parties, family dinners, school programs, and the end of the winter semester, we are all feeling overwhelmed.

So, what can we do to minimize our stress and find enjoyment during the holidays? First, it’s important to set realistic expectations. As we’re preparing for the holidays, we need to acknowledge that things may not go exactly as planned, and that’s OK. By focusing on what’s really important to our families we can take our stress levels down a notch. Stuck in traffic or a long line at the grocery store? Instead of letting a “moment” ruin the day we can use the time as an opportunity to reflect on all of the good things that happened that day.

And when other people are stressing us out, remember: We can’t change how others act but we can change the way we respond to them. The holidays can be very difficult for people who have experienced a loss or people who are alone. By taking a deep breath and responding with kindness, we can lower our stress levels and maybe even bring some happiness to someone else.

Finally, we should remember to take time for ourselves. Saying yes to the things we enjoy — and no to the things that cause stress — is not only acceptable but encouraged. Reducing our stress helps boost our mood and promotes a healthy brain.

Happy Holidays from all of us at the BHI!

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

This holiday season, why not give a gift that helps relieve stress? BHI and [Harvard Health](#) recommend these gift ideas for yourself and others.

- **Think positive thoughts.** Sometimes you need a reminder to help put things in perspective, and that's where the [Cope Notes](#) can help. The BHI has partnered with this subscription-based app that uses daily messages to train your brain to think healthy. Give the gift of Cope Notes and save 10 percent by entering the code **BE BRAIN HEALTHY**, and check out the **Brain BOOST** [Power of Positive Thinking](#).
- **Meditate.** Research shows meditation and guided relaxation can help you learn to relax and lower your stress. Deep abdominal breathing, focusing on a soothing word (such as "peace" or "calm"), visualizing a tranquil scene, yoga, or tai chi can all help relieve your stress. Guided-relaxation exercises from the [Benson-Henry Institute](#) can help someone get started along with this [Brain BOOST](#).
- **Practice yoga.** Yoga focuses on mindfulness — being aware and in the moment — and can help control your heart rate and breathing while lowering the level of some stress hormones in your body. Check out our [Brain BOOST](#) on the benefits of yoga, then sign up with a friend for the class that meets your needs.
- **Get some sleep.** Your body and your brain need sleep to function, and a comfortable sleep environment can make a difference. Give your sleep partner the gift of a quality mattress, pillows, or bedding and you will both sleep better. Learn more by checking out our [Brain BOOSTS](#) about sleep.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:
 - Stress resilience
 - Nutrition
 - Physical activity
 - Sleep
 - Social connection
 - Emotional wellbeing
 - Meaning and Purpose
 - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
 - Engaging with nature
 - General health
 - Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the **Be Brain Healthy** movement, **because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference**. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).