

# Wellness Ways

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## Family Focus: Stay on the Same Page This Holiday Season

*“Over the river and through the woods – to Grandmother’s house we go.”*

Sure, the lyrics are swell when you’re riding in a sleigh through beautiful white snow and everyone in the family is happy.

Now put yourself in a cramped car with kids who don’t want to be on the road this holiday. They just want to stay home in front of the television or computer screen and could not care less about visiting family. And the parents really don’t relish fighting thick traffic and stressing behind the wheel when they could be relaxing in their own living rooms watching football on TV.

How to resolve these traditional family feuds and find some harmony this holiday season? Don’t try so hard.

One of the biggest disappointments every December comes from expectations not matching reality. Life is not like a greeting card or a movie – it can be messy and full of conflict. Meet this conflict head-on by talking with your immediate family before the holidays hit. Decide where and when you’ll travel, when you’ll stay home, when you’ll entertain and when you’ll enjoy some togetherness as a single family unit.

Start out the month with everyone on the same page. Decide if that traditional road trip is practical with gasoline around \$3 a gallon.

Figure out a way to combine visits with several family members at a time. Look for interesting

**Keep the control switch in the hands of your family unit – don’t let other people plan your holidays. A little flexibility and planning can go a long way toward building holiday harmony.**

twists to traditions. Be creative with free time and let everyone in the family choose something he or she wants to do.



## Get the Best Out of Stress

**No one wants stress, but everyone talks about it - especially during the holidays.**

Truth is, we all experience stress; the way we deal with it makes it good or bad. Good? Yes, stress can be good. Properly applied, stress can motivate us to:

- meet deadlines
- multitask
- be more creative
- amaze ourselves

This holiday season, take a new look at stress. The first step: recognize the feeling of being overwhelmed with too much to do and not enough time. The second steps: prioritize, say no when necessary and try to see the big picture. Look beyond holiday crunch time and be aware that it doesn't last forever.

Finally, use that anxious energy produced by stress to get things done. Stay busy and do, don't stew. Worrying accomplishes nothing. Succumbing to the harmful effects of stress is easy, you just throw up your hands and surrender. This year, embrace it. The stress is on, and now it's time to work harder, quicken the pace and put your body and mind into a higher gear for a few weeks.

The best bonus in stress is hidden in the word itself. Between the letter 's' on both ends of the word are the garbled letters that spell out "rest." The average adult needs seven to nine hours of sleep in each 24-hour cycle. More than half the U.S. adult population doesn't get the necessary rest. Sleep deprivation can lead to weight gain, depression and a host of health problems.

If stressed-out people can harness negative energy caused by stress, control it and use it to get things done, exhaustion at the end of the day might just mean a well-deserved good night's sleep.

### Pass the Stress Test This Holiday with a Good Stress Strategy:

- S**—Sleep between seven and nine hours each night .
- T**—Take control of your busy schedule - you set the priorities.
- R**—Remember the reasons for holidays - to celebrate blessings and have fun.
- E**—Exercise daily, even a short, brisk walk is helpful.
- S**—Stay busy and turn negative energy into positive energy to get things done.
- S**—Say no when overbooked - don't load on more pressure.

# Vegetable, Fruit and Cheese Gift Basket

Who says the holidays have to be filled with fattening sweets and foods that are bad for us? Take health into your own hands this holiday and fight back. Give the gift of good health to family and friends through customized gift baskets filled with colorful fruits and vegetables, low calorie cheeses and low sodium soup mixes. This gift can be so colorful all it needs is a big bow to make it ready to deliver. Picking out your own fresh fruits and produce is cheaper and more creative than buying ready-made items. Below is a checklist for a healthy holiday gift basket:

## Ingredients

Peppers (red, orange and yellow)  
Sweet potatoes  
Baking potatoes  
Squash  
Red and white grapes  
Organic bananas  
Red, green and yellow apples  
Low sodium soup mix  
Cheese made with skim milk

## Directions

Select a medium to large basket that will hold all the items. Arrange the fruits, vegetables, cheeses and soup mix box by putting the largest items on the bottom and alternating colors throughout. Include your favorite healthy recipe on the gift card and top off with a decorative bow. Hand deliver.



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## Savor the Flavor

~ Less is More ~



### Nobody wants to start out the New Year with 10 pounds of new holiday fat.

Americans who eat and drink their way through November and December can find themselves feeling bloated and overweight come January - with nothing to show for all that gorging except tighter clothes and new bulges.

When it comes to those delicious homemade desserts and rich traditional drinks and foods, remember the 90/10 rule. If you eat sensibly and healthy 90 percent of the time, you can treat yourself and enjoy some of the not-so-healthy stuff the other 10 percent of the time.

Eating great tasting but fattening foods in smaller doses actually makes us appreciate them more, and they taste better. Some tricks to try to get the most out of all that flavor is to use tall, thin glasses instead of short, fat glasses; use smaller plates and eat only from your own plate rather than grazing at the buffet; and stop yourself when your hunger meter tells you you're full.

Plan healthy meals ahead of time and don't allow yourself to get so hungry you'll eat anything. Save the best stuff as a treat to reward your healthy eating discipline the rest of the time.

**Remember the old saying:  
Moderation is the key to success.**