

HEALTHFUL TIPS



31 Holiday Activities

December 2015 will be here and gone before you know it. Make the most of this wonderful month by planning some extra activities to enrich the season and create special memories. We've put together an activity for every day of the month—pick and choose the one(s) that work for you. Enjoy!

December 1

Set your focus for the month by jotting down 2-3 things that are most important to you this holiday season. Post your list in a conspicuous place. Throughout your day, let your eyes land on that list, take a few deep breaths and focus on the real reasons for the season and do your best to let the rest go.

December 2

Buy a new holiday spiced tea to enjoy throughout the entire month.

December 3

Buy, wrap and deliver a gift for someone less fortunate.

December 4

Homemade ornaments, decorations or Advent calendars will be treasured for years to come. This is a great family project, but if you don't have children and/or your spouse has no interest—invite a few friends over. Pinterest has plenty of amazing ideas.

December 5

Put a small Christmas tree in each bedroom. Decorate it with popcorn on a string, homemade ornaments, and a string of mini lights. Use darker light colors to create a soft glow that can be left on all night.

December 6

Plan an anonymous act of kindness that you can carry out next week. The whole idea is that the recipient will not find out it was you.

**Blessed is the season
which engages the whole world
in a conspiracy of love.**

Hamilton Wright Mabie

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking:

- Send someone in financial need a few bucks and an encouraging card
- Make (or buy) a CD of uplifting songs
- Give an encouraging book — used is okay
- Print positive quotes on festive paper
- Fill a gift bag with their favorite snacks
- Buy a gas card and a toy car from the dollar store — you can come up with a catchy note (“Here’s a little something to get you from point A to point B —Happy Holidays”)

December 7

Find a few minutes to look up low-fat, low-sugar versions of your family's favorite holiday recipes (www.barixclinicsstore.com is a great resource). Add the ingredients to your shopping list so you can make a trial batch.



December 8

Bring holiday tunes into the kitchen as you prep, cook and clean up.

December 9

Look for gifts that help those you care about to move towards their health goals. Consider

a fitness class, an exercise outfit, a unique BPA-free water bottle, healthy stocking stuffers or a subscription to a magazine that promotes a healthy lifestyle.

December 10

The holiday season is ripe with opportunities to give back. Consider a donation to a food bank, an adopt-a-family program, volunteering, sponsoring a child, helping out a neighbor in need—the list goes on and on. Giving is not only good for the receiver; it also has health benefits for the giver.

December 11

Give your pooch a little extra TLC with these yummy and healthy frozen treats.

- 4 cups plain yogurt (use low-fat if your dog is a little pudgy)
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 ripe banana, mashed

Place all of the ingredients into a blender and mix until smooth. Pour into lined muffin tins or mini muffin tins. Freeze until firm. Remove paper liner and store in a closed container until treat time!

December 12

Laughter is good medicine. What makes you laugh? Is it a funny movie, a funny book, watching the monkeys at the zoo, people-watching, a great friend or a good comedian? Find an opportunity or two this week to laugh more than you normally do.

December 13

The days are short and the nights are long—a perfect time to enjoy the peacefulness of a crackling fire, a soothing candle, Christmas tree lights or dimmed lighting. Create an environment that allows your mind to slow its chatter and your body to find true relaxation.

Sharing the holiday with other people, and feeling that you're giving of yourself, gets you past all the commercialism.

Caroline Kennedy

December 14

There are lots of ways to enjoy the outdoors (just be sure to dress right) — a brisk walk in the cold, sledding, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, making snowmen, ice skating or having a snowball fight. Enjoy of a cup of sugar-free hot cocoa or sugar-free apple cider to warm up.

December 15

Write down big family moments that have happened throughout the year. Then read your list aloud after everyone has finished opening their gifts. If you continue this tradition year after year, the children in your family will have these treasured moments to recall and reminisce.

December 16

Communities are brimming with holiday events. Be sure to enjoy a holiday play, movie or concert.

December 17

Go caroling. Schedule carols at a nursing home if you're the planning type. If not, hop in the car and show up at your friends' front doors for impromptu carols. If singing in public isn't your thing, print out lyrics and put on music for a sing-a-long at home.

December 18

Have a holiday movie night or a marathon weekend. Snuggle up and get ready for some holiday cheer.



December 19

Snuggle up on the couch to read inspiring Christmas stories together. Find an inspiring book that you would like to read or short stories if time is limited.

December 20

Take a trip down memory lane by looking through pictures and videos of Christmases past. Take time to celebrate the people and memories that have passed and look forward to making new memories in the future.

December 21

Gather family and/or friends for an evening holiday light tour. Bundle up, play holiday music and drive through the neighborhoods enjoying the wonderful displays of lighting.

December 22

On the shortest day of the year, celebrate the light in your life. Have a candlelit dinner, line your walk or driveway with luminaries, relax to the soft light of a fire or go for an evening walk to stargaze.

December 23

Make time for a light workout. It will help you to stay energized and relieve any holiday stress that is building up.



December 24

Buy the fixings for gingerbread houses and let your friends and family get creative. Graham crackers are an easy sub for the walls and roof. Frosting sticks it all together and makes a snowy yard.

December 25

The mind, body and spirit are all interconnected. Set aside time today for those things that give you a sense of inner peace, comfort, and strength. Everyone is different, but consider praying, meditating, singing or listening to devotional songs or attending church services.

December 26

Infuse your home with a warm inviting holiday scent by sprinkling cinnamon on a baking sheet and roasting in the oven for 10 minutes.



December 27

Gather some friends and rent a cabin for a fun-filled winter weekend. If December is too busy, book it for January—you'll have something to look forward to.

December 28

Have a family game night.

December 29

Connect with one person who has been on your mind lately—schedule a lunch date, chat on the phone or better yet—meet for a walk.

December 30

Clean out your kitchen. Get rid of old spices, foods with added sugar, foods that are high in calories and any leftover holiday treats. Go shopping and stock up on fresh unprocessed foods.

December 31

Bring in the New Year in moderation. Look for healthy snacks for your celebration and low sugar alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages. Look for sugar-free drink mixes, add fresh or frozen (without sugar) fruit and you'll have a fun drink to ring in the New Year.

As we struggle with shopping lists and invitations, compounded by December's bad weather, it is good to be reminded that there are people in our lives who are worth this aggravation, and people to whom we are worth the same.

Donald E. Westlake

