



Saving “Me Time” for the holidays

by Sharon Vail, for The Bulletin

During the giving season, be sure to treat yourself with the healthiest gift available: time



Does this sound like you? Office party on Friday night, shopping for presents on Saturday, another party Saturday night, kids' church program on Sunday, need to bake cookies for neighborhood cookie swap, relatives flying in on Monday, need to buy groceries and fix dinner Monday night after working all day... Aaaghhh!

What happened to the joy and peace of the season? It went the way of those merry holiday cards you meant to send but never got around to. There's just too much to do and not enough of you to go around.

So how do you keep your sanity and still find time for yourself during the holidays? Ah, that's an age-old question that gets increasingly more difficult to answer.

"It's not just during the holidays," said Stacy Waltman, president of Integration Coaching in Bend. "It seems like all of us are inundated with things to do. It's part and parcel of where we all are in our

culture, but it's exacerbated during the holidays."

Yet, despite the demands on our time, we really need to set aside "me" time. That's the time you take to recharge your batteries, to get centered again, to get rid of some of the stress.

"I highly recommend for everyone, for their own well being, for their ability to serve others and take care of others, that they take care of themselves," said Waltman.

OK, right now you're thinking, "Easy for you to say." Look at it this way. Waltman likens it to the safety talk you hear every time you fly. If the oxygen mask falls down from the ceiling in an emergency, put yours on first before you help anyone else.

"Of course, it's something so simple and so obvious, yet we don't tend to practice it," she said. "We don't have much to give if we haven't rejuvenated ourselves first."

Finding rejuvenation time can be as easy as EASE. That's the acronym

counselor and hypnotherapist Jane Meyers of Spiritual Solutions in Bend recommends.

“Eliminate, Add, Simplify and Express,” she said.

First, ask yourself why you’re doing the things you’re doing. Are you doing them because they bring you joy? Are you looking for approval? Maybe you’re afraid that if you don’t do them, (fill in the blank) will happen.

“The ones that give you great joy are the ones you want to keep doing,” said Meyers. “If you could, possibly eliminate the others. Even if you just eliminated one thing, it would be a start. Think about things you’re doing that deplete you, and cut back on that. Cut back on sugar, cut down or eliminate time in front of the TV.”

As for the “add” part of her acronym, how is that possible?

“Adding something may seem counterintuitive when you’re trying to de-stress,” said Meyers, “but if you can create a tradition or a practice that enriches your life, it would actually bring more balance.”

“Allow ourselves at least 10 minutes a day of focusing and being quiet,” said Waltman.



Start or end the day with those 10 minutes. Your “me” time may mean spending time with your family. Meyers suggests starting a candle-lighting tradition in the evening, when each family member lights a candle and tells one thing for which they’re grateful.

“Getting bundled up and going outside, and looking at the moon and the stars,” said Waltman. “Really looking for the elements to give you a place of recharging. Breathing deeply, which goes hand and hand with a sense of gratitude.”

Soothing music, soft lights and aromatherapy can also help us recharge.

Meyers said simplify means to take the essence of what you want and make it easier for yourself. Instead of a big sit-down dinner party, plan a potluck.

The “express” part of Meyers’ acronym may be the most difficult, but sometimes it needs to be done.

“Is there something you’re keeping in that you need to say?” said Meyers. “That could be a resentment that is contaminating a relationship. It could be an appreciation you’re keeping to yourself. Or it could be a desire you need to share or act upon.”

Express reaffirmations to yourself, said Waltman. Quiet that little voice that reminds you of all the “should-haves.” Instead say, “I respect myself, and I’m in balance. One of the ways I stay in balance is saying no to some things and yes to others.”

Saying “no” is a big demon for many people.

“Getting in the habit is the first step,” said Waltman. “That’s where you ask, ‘Am I putting on my own oxygen mask first because I’m not really serving or giving to anybody if I haven’t put aside this time for myself?’”

Meyers said “no” includes setting boundaries. Parents, loving though they may be, are notorious for wanting to continue childhood traditions. But now that their children are grown with children of their own, it’s time the grown children make their own traditions with their families.

“A lot of times, families with young children get into that,” said Meyers. “They’re still expected to show up at the parents’ home, yet they want to have a celebration at their home. They have to speak up and say ‘I don’t want to do it that way! It’s hard.’”

Eliminating stress during the holidays may be as simple as better organization. Susan Bailey of Susan’s Organizing Service of Bend likes to make lists for everything, from shopping lists to lists of “must do,” “like to do,” and “could do.” Make a budget, and stick to it, keep a calendar and set priorities, she said.

EASE into the holidays, wear your oxygen mask and find joy again.

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