Sutter Health

Make Time to Care for Yourself

With the holidays approaching, it's not uncommon to think of everyone else before yourself. Although it might feel selfish during busy times, giving yourself a break is anything but. Stress management is vital to preventing health problems, such as heart disease and depression.

Start small. Schedule 20 minutes for meditation, a mind-body practice that promotes calmness. All you need is a quiet location, a comfortable posture, your focused attention and an open attitude. Once there, ask your body what it needs. An intense workout? A good laugh? Find the revitalization methods that work for you. Consider these simple techniques:

- **Write a gratitude list.** Jot down at least one thing each day that was good, even if it's as simple as getting out of work 20 minutes early.

- **Sing in the shower.** Research suggests that singing promotes self-expression, stress reduction, better mental health and feelings of empowerment.

- **Schedule a phone date with a friend.** Friends make life more enjoyable and provide support in times of need. It can be equally rewarding to lend an ear.

- **Have herbal tea for dessert.** A mug of unsweetened tea every night after dinner may be a nice way to unwind and relax without adding extra calories and sugar.

- **Breathe in essential oils.** Aromatherapy uses essential oils to make you feel better physically and emotionally. Try peppermint to boost your energy. Use chamomile to help you sleep or lavender to reduce anxiety.

Sources include American Diabetes Association, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Cancer Institute, National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health and National Institute of Mental Health.