



Rediscover the Art of Celebration

CHALLENGE

Stay positive during the holiday season.



Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you choose to enjoy the holidays.
2. Read "Rediscover the Art of Celebration."
3. To complete the Challenge, you must do something from the list below to celebrate the holidays on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep a record of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

In the Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge isn't exactly an icon for holiday cheer. He was obsessed with his finances, insensitive to others, and unhappy about life in general. If you've ever felt a little like Scrooge, you're not the only one who's been frustrated during the holidays.

Holidays or not, there will always be something to worry about. In the United States, the average household has \$16,000 in credit card debt. More than a million homeowners will have faced foreclosure this year. Millions more are out of work. And at least 50 million adults are without health insurance.

Anxiety, depression, frustration, and anger are common responses to challenges like these. But stepping into the holiday season with a bad attitude can make things worse. Perspective makes all the difference.

When Scrooge took a closer look at his life during a sleepless night, his attitude changed everything. With a little effort, you can enjoy the holiday season too.

Top 10 Holiday Traditions

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Eat dinner with family and friends | 6. Drive to see holiday decorations |
| 2. Exchange gifts | 7. Bake holiday treats |
| 3. Attend a religious service | 8. Host a game night |
| 4. Send greeting cards | 9. Take a family photo |
| 5. Decorate the house | 10. Watch holiday movies |

Here are 6 ways to celebrate:

1. Think Positively



When you take a look at your holiday to-do list, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, especially if finances are tight. Worrying about gifts and travel arrangements won't help you get things done. Instead of focusing

on the negative, think positively. An optimistic outlook can help you be more productive and tackle your to-do list one thing at a time. It can also help you recognize what's most important during the holidays, and every day.

Look on the bright side of things. It can benefit your health. University of Wisconsin researchers found that optimistic people were much less likely to have a stroke than pessimistic people. Having a positive attitude may also reduce the risk of a heart attack, add to your longevity, and boost your immune system.

During the holidays, practice positive thinking. If you're stuck in traffic, you might feel the urge to complain about the delay, bad drivers, or exhaust spewing from the car in front of you. Instead, enjoy the scenery. Listen to uplifting music. Or wave to the driver next to you. Think about the things you're thankful for, write them down, and keep the list with you. Focus on the positive and you'll enjoy the holidays more.

2. Nurture Relationships



Connecting with family and friends is an important part of the holiday season. Give your mom a call, or write her a letter. Emails count. (So do texts!) If you keep putting off meeting

up with old friends because you're too busy, make time to get together. If you have to be away from home this holiday season, find a way to let your family know they're important to you.

Researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that people with healthy relationships have a higher level of well-being. The researchers interviewed about 700 people and found that those in committed relationships were

happier. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services says families who care about each other and spend time together are happier.

Teach your kids to cook a holiday meal. Create a care package for someone serving in the military. Make homemade cards with friends. Wrap gifts together. Invite someone you know who is single or alone for the holidays to dinner or your family celebration. By sharing experiences with other people, you'll create meaningful memories that will last beyond the holidays.

Chanukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa celebrations are wonderful opportunities to reconnect with families and friends. Nurture your relationships this holiday season. Spend meaningful time together, share a meal, or catch up online. Everyone benefits.



3. Make a Spiritual Connection

Whether you're religious or not, making time for spiritual exercise can change the way you experience the holidays.

In a Duke University study of 4,000 people, researchers found that reading religious texts, praying, or meditating helped participants maintain their health. Researchers believe the practice reduced stress and anxiety, and strengthened the immune system and cardiovascular system.

The practice of meditation has been shown to provide additional health benefits. In a study published in the journal *Stroke*, researchers found that regular meditation helped lower blood pressure within six to nine months for some participants.

The holidays offer a lot of opportunities to reflect on more than life's daily grind. When you make time for spiritual activities or meditation, you could well gain a fresh perspective on life.

Healthy Ways to Celebrate the Holidays

- Take a walk or hike outdoors to enjoy the season.
- Make healthy holiday treats to share with others.
- Donate gently used clothes and other items to charity.
- Deliver meals to people in need.
- Give yourself the gift of quiet time.



4. Give Meaningful Service

Volunteering or giving service to others is a great way to celebrate the holidays – for you and those who are on the receiving side of things.

Opportunities for volunteering or supporting a cause are everywhere. You could:

- Help deliver meals to seniors in your area.
- Volunteer at your local community center or shelter.
- Help a non-profit group organize a holiday fundraising event.

Local schools, churches, and synagogues often need volunteers to help them with special events or on a regular basis. Look for ways to help a neighbor or a friend during the holidays.

Before hosting their own holiday celebration, some people put the needs of others first. Donate your gently used clothes to a charity or shelter during the holidays. Participate in a blanket or coat drive in your area. Or make plans with family and friends to serve a meal at a homeless shelter before you enjoy your own holiday meal.

When you volunteer your time, you generally feel good. But there's more to it than that. Studies show that volunteering can ward off depression and even help you live longer. Last year, Americans volunteered an estimated 8.1 billion hours. But it only takes a few hours a week for you to reap the health benefits that come from lending a hand.

Brighten the holidays for someone this season by sharing your time and talents.

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5. Manage Your Money

Unless you have a mountain of money stashed away, you probably need to set some limits on your holiday spending. Overspending

and worrying about money can take the celebration out of the holidays in a hurry. In a recent national survey by Mental Health America, 48% of all Americans are stressed by finances.

Create a budget for your holiday spending. Decide what you need money for during the holidays (gifts, travel, entertaining) and create a plan.

If you plan to buy gifts for family and friends, set a cost limit. If you exchange gifts, agree as a group on how much to spend on each gift. Stretch your dollars by shopping for deals, making inexpensive gifts, or trimming your recipient list if you have to. Plan ahead, and stick to your budget.



6. Enjoy Traditions

Scrooge was given the chance to change, spread good will, and help others. He took the opportunity, and so can you if the holidays haven't always gone the way you wanted them to.

What are your favorite holiday traditions? Many adults continue to follow traditions they enjoyed as children. Eating cookies in grandma's kitchen, sledding on a neighborhood hill, traveling to a favorite destination, and decorating the house are just a few traditions many people enjoy. Other holiday traditions might include taking time to give thanks for what you have, remembering loved ones who have passed on, or donating to charity.

Traditions worth keeping are those that help you feel good and encourage love and friendship with those around you. Celebrating traditions can help you feel more connected to your family and community, and feel more centered and peaceful as a human being.

Researchers have also found that recognizing traditions can strengthen relationships. In a recent study, couples who shared religious holiday traditions reported greater satisfaction in their relationship than those who didn't.

Celebrate the holidays with your favorite traditions or choose new ones. Then share them with your family and friends.

Sources:

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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Make a notation each day you celebrate the holidays.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you were able to meet the goal. You must meet this goal at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of good health!
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ if requested, or enter your completion of this Health Challenge™ on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
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_____ Number of days this month I celebrated the holidays

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking



Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____