



Dark Days of Winter or Christmas Time is Here

Arlene Dorrough PA-C

As we come to the close of the year, we seem to find ourselves more and more busy, trying to get things done before the year is over, maintaining our cool in the face of increasing work demands as coverage is needed for so many who are gone for the holidays or simply home sick during cold and flu season.

During this busy time of the year, it is easy to lose yourself in the darkness of the season. Darkness? You ask, for most people, the holiday season is full of colorful lights, bright, gregarious music, and a barrage of well wishes, warm drinks and fun activities. But for some of us, those who have social anxieties, or are simply introverts, it is a time to turn inward, to avoid all of the noise and bustle of the season, we insulate ourselves from friends and family and social pressures and we often find ourselves disappointing those we love as we work to protect ourselves from the cacophony of 'The Holidays'. And this is followed inevitably by guilt that you are letting your friends and loved ones down if you do not participate in every activity, they wish you to.

How many social engagements you accept over the holidays is completely up to you, but I urge you to embrace your choices as the best ones for you, whether or not, you are disappointing others. The pressure to make people happy can create untenable situations for you as you are struggling to please others and neglecting your own needs in the process. It's just as okay to sip chai tea in the solitude of your home, as it is to sip cocoa in the back of a sleigh ride packed with family and friends.

Whatever works for you is the key. If you find yourself at the bottom of your reserves after a busy workday, consider taking a rest over the weekend, instead of packing your days with must-do activities that will further stretch your reserves and leave you tired and overwrought come Monday morning when it's time to get back to your patients. I suggest choosing one weekly activity that does not cause you stress, and you can focus on being present for that activity and whomever you

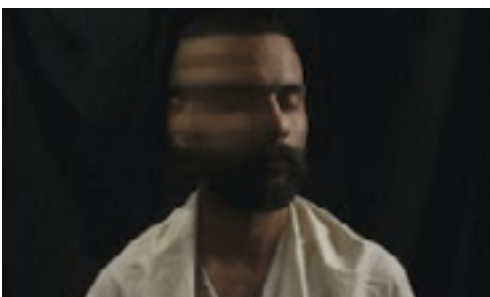
are doing it with. It will allow you time to appreciate the time together and enjoy yourself in a way that you will remember fondly, instead of a blur of activity that leaves you coming up for air and glad it's finally over.

I also suggest you scale things back. There is no need for you to host a party, scour your house, make every dish and be a scintillating host with games planned for everyone in the group. Choosing a select group of friends to come over and just put in a movie. (It doesn't even have to be a Christmas movie...Die Hard for instance). Enjoying the company of friends does not have to be a complicated affair, keep it simple so you have more time to enjoy yourself and soak up the camaraderie of your closest friends and family who have room for you and your feelings this holiday season.

It can be difficult to manage the packed clinic schedules and accommodate patients fitting in last minute healthcare needs before their insurance resets next month, but survival is imperative and sometimes that means simply saying "No". Setting boundaries in a respectful way is part of effective time management and good communication with your professional colleagues. It is much better to manage expectations up front, ahead of the busiest times, so effective planning can be done, and no one ends up holding the bag with more work than they can handle (especially if that person is you).

So whether you are lighting a menorah, a kinara or a yule log, take time for yourself, to rest, to re-charge and to fully enjoy the best and brightest of the year before another year rolls around with its own fresh new challenges and rewards.

Happy Holidays everyone, and have a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year!



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