Gift others with small acts of kindness

There are many wonderful ways to tap into the true meaning of the season and make an impact on a person’s (or an animal’s) life. Among them: volunteering at a soup kitchen or animal shelter, making monetary donations to a charity, collecting canned goods for a local food bank, or sponsoring a local family who may need some extra help this year. However, simply doing small acts of random kindness that lifts a person’s spirits or expresses appreciation or gratitude can also warm their heart as well as yours. Start with offering a smile or a sincere compliment. Then, consider these other ways to pay it forward this holiday:

• Pay the toll for the car behind you, or the fare for the person behind you on public transit
• Write a coworker a recommendation on their LinkedIn account
• Offer to pet-sit or child-sit for a busy friend or neighbor
• Leave a finished book on a waiting room chair for the next person to read

• Did you receive great customer service from someone? Pass on positive feedback to their supervisor.
• Direct someone to the parking space you’re vacating or let someone get in front of you in the checkout line
• See someone struggling with groceries? Offer to help load them in their trunk.
• Observe a family or couple taking selfies at an event? Offer to take the pic for them.
• Purposely leave change in the laundromat or snack machines

…and don’t forget to offer a bit of kindness to yourself this season. Try putting a daily sticky note on your mirror containing a positive, uplifting message, or starting a gratitude journal writing down three things each day for which you are grateful.

Letting go of perfection

Being perfect really isn’t attainable, yet it is easy to get caught up in the unrealistic expectations you may set for yourself. This can wreak havoc on your well-being by causing you to feel overwhelmed, stressed and defeated. These tips can help you simplify your expectations and stop striving for perfection.

• Try to live up to your own standards. Much of our desire to be perfect is rooted in our perceptions of what other people think of us.
• Aim to achieve your personal best. Remind yourself that not everyone or every situation is truly “perfect.” Everyone has their own issues and insecurities, but not everyone reveals them.
• Talk to yourself as you would a family member or friend. Positive self-talk can go a long way in helping you accept yourself, imperfections and all!
• Refocus your thoughts. Rather than being caught up in perfection, emphasize the progress you are making and celebrate every success, even if it is not exactly how you envisioned it.
• Give yourself a break. Find an activity or hobby that helps boost your mood, whether it’s reading, yoga, crafts, listening to music, or just playing with your pet.

• Work it out. Even brief physical activity helps release the “feel-good” brain chemicals that can boost a sense of well-being. Take a quick walk the next time you begin feel overwhelmed.

Taking simple steps to overcome your desire to be “perfect” may be difficult at first. Practicing these steps over time not only will help you feel less overwhelmed, but can help improve your overall sense of well-being.
Avoid holiday burnout

The flurry of seasonal activities can leave you feeling frazzled and drained of any drop of good cheer. Using the basic principles of mindfulness—which is about staying grounded, aware and focused on the moment—can keep you from feeling overwhelmed, helping you reconnect with the joys that this season can bring. **Try these tips:**

**Tune in to what matters.** Focus on the lights, the parades, or whatever part of the holidays gives you meaning and/or makes you happy. Give up what makes you stressed.

**Scratch multitasking off your list.** Focusing fully on doing one thing at a time, whether it's stringing lights with the kids or writing a year-end report, can loosen the grip of anxious thoughts and help you feel more balanced.

**Take a few minutes to walk in the fresh air.** Feeling your feet firmly strike the ground can bring you back to the calmness of the moment, silencing anxious thoughts such as how you're going to get everything done!

**Tap into the small moments of joy.** It may not come from hosting an extravagant holiday spread or finding the exact right gift. Just seeing the winter moon shining through the trees or your dog romping through the first snowfall can bring heartfelt delight. Savor it!

**Family bickering or things not going as planned?** Instead of reacting and letting anxiety or anger take over, just observe your emotions. This will help you reconnect more with yourself, and by so doing, may help you experience more effective connectedness with others.

If you find that you can't shake stress, anxiety or the “holiday blues,” **talk to your doctor or other health practitioner for help.**

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**Safe Toys and Gifts Month**

When it comes to toys and gifts, it is critical to remember to consider the safety and age range of the toys.

For helpful tips, visit: https://bit.ly/32P1qSB