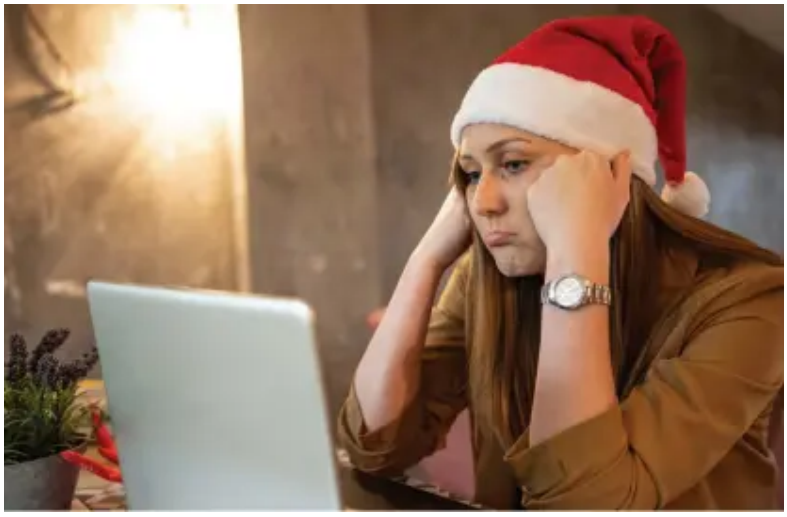
- Holidays / Mental health

It's OK to take time out if you're not feeling festive

Townsville Bulletin · 5 Dec 2024 · 31 · Health Chats s with Dr Sarah

Some of you may have noticed that I didn't get an article out last week. Because, I decided that it was important to practise what I preach. This has been a year that has been difficult for so many people in so many ways, and I have to admit that the root canal I had last week really was the straw that made this doctor realise it was time to rest her back a little. This is the article that I started but didn't finish until this week because I followed my own advice.



Look, I have not made a secret about how much I love this time of year. You can feel the 'festive' in the air. But I would be lying if I said that there wasn't another undertone ... that stress of trying to cram in everything for work and family before the slow down when everything closes for the season. So, this week I thought we might talk about some tools and techniques to get us through the rest of this year while managing end of year stress – judiciously interspersed, of course, with hinting to our friends, families and partners about appropriate presents (hint to my husband: new fitness trackers are always welcome and a facial never goes unwanted.)

1. SET BOUNDARIES

So many invites, so much work to get done before the end of the year. So many kids concerts/school events/ farewells/ welcomes/ drink. It gets overwhelming. So here it is – I am giving you (and myself) absolute permission to say 'no thank you' and to acknowledge that it is a complete sentence. Right now, the humidity has crept up to 80 per cent, the rains are coming and this alone is enough to make us fatigued. Acknowledge that you cannot be everything to everyone, prioritise the important stuff and politely decline the rest.

2. PROTECT THE BASE OF YOUR HEALTH PYRAMID

Try and eat some nutrient rich food, drink enough water, protect your sleep. We can't just forge forward without the right energy and resilience.

3. TRY AND HAVE AT LEAST TWO ALCOHOL FREE DAYS A WEEK

We have chatted about this before. Alcohol is ultimately a depressant and effects our sleep. I love a social wine as much as anyone but maybe just make

sure you are giving yourself a chance to recover from your last drink before having the next one

4. MOVE MINDFULLY

Get out for a walk, do some yoga (there are heaps of great yoga sessions on Youtube for free), go to the gym, play pickleball – find the movement that sparks joy for you and helps top up those endorphins. It is hot but the fresh air and break in routine really helps you to stay mentally healthy.

5. TRY TO HAVE MEANINGFUL CONTACT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

We are, by design, social beings, but the quality of the contact is important. Maybe take a friend or loved one on that walk, have a coffee catch up. Talk with the people who form your village and spend time with them. Try to have conversation rather than just socialisation in loud, busy places.

6.BE KIND

You are feeling burnt out. There is a good chance that the people around you are too. Remember we are all on our own paths and exert the empathy that you would like to have reflected back to you. Wet season arguments don't help anyone's mental health.

The holidays are coming. Hang in there. But, if it is all getting a bit overwhelming, please see your trusted doctor and work out how we can further help you to get through these last few kilometres of your marathon year.