



The Masterpiece Living Mosaic

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*“Merry Stressmas!” It should come as no surprise to learn that the holiday season (November through December) is often considered the sixth most stressful life event. Of people surveyed in a national study, 65% admitted to being anxious during the holidays, and 45% would rather skip it altogether. What can we do when the “most wonderful time of the year” is anything but? Brain expert, Dr. Rob Winningham, weighs in with some valuable tips for staying calm during the busy season and preserving memories in the process...**

Enhancing Brain Health: Don't Stress About It

By Dr. Rob Winningham

While a small amount of stress can actually make us pay attention, motivate us to take care of things, and maybe even help us make new memories, a lot of stress can have a negative impact on memory and our health. In the short term, being too stressed about something can cause us to not pay attention to what we are supposed to be doing. For example, if someone is late for a holiday dinner and they are rushing to try to get out of the house, they may become overly stressed thinking about the repercussions of being late and might not pay attention to whether they have their wallet with them. The act of *thinking* about the stressful situation leaves less mental room to think about other things, which can “dumb us down” in the short run. In the long run, there is evidence that people who are chronically stressed are more likely to develop dementia. Evidence also suggests that high levels of chronic stress can damage neurons in our brains, particularly neurons in the hippocampus, where new memories are made. Stress also increases the chance of developing depression, which in turn can impair memory performance.

What should someone do if they want to reduce their stress? First, they should get more

physical exercise, which can alleviate anxiety and give a sense of wellbeing. Second, they can try to reduce the stressors. For example, if getting stuck in traffic and being late is a constant stressor for someone then that person should simply leave earlier. Here are some other ways to reduce stress:

- **Stretch.**
- **Download a mindfulness training app, and learn about and engage in mindfulness.**
- **Take a warm bath.**
- **Stand up and smile.**
- **Learn to say “no.”**
- **Minimize caffeine intake.**
- **If things are out of your control, admit that and accept it.**
- **Eat healthier food.**
- **Listen to your favorite music.**
- **Look at photos of family and friends.**
- **Organize your time.**
- **Make a list of things that need to be done.**
- **Talk to a friend.**
- **Take a nap.**
- **Read a book.**
- **Recognize that life is a work in progress and that not everything will be done exactly as you had hoped or planned.**
- **Don't avoid doing things that need to be done as a way of reducing stress, as recent research shows that can increase stress in the long run.**

* REFERENCES: Healthline.com; APA.org; NBCnews.com; prnewswire.co.uk

Ann's Dance



“Could I have this dance,” Ken Ray, fitness coordinator at Judson Park, asked resident Ann Toth. The community was hosting a dance as part of Masterpiece Living’s Movement Matters campaign.

“I’d love to,” she answered. “But I can’t dance anymore.”

After Ann’s husband died, she was unable to go anywhere that had big band music playing ... it hurt too much. Now, years later, Ann felt herself swaying to the music and tapping her foot from the sidelines; but there was still one problem ... she didn’t feel comfortable in her ability to walk, let alone dance. For the past year, Ann has been working diligently on improving her balance using NU step and a walking aid.

“I’ve seen you in the hallways working hard. I think you can do it,” Ken replied. “You can use my shoulders for support.” She agreed, and with each step, her balance grew stronger, and before she knew it, she’d danced through the entire song. “I loved watching her face go from uncertainty to accomplishment to enjoyment and pride,” Ken told the Mosaic.

“If I could do this every day, I’d be strong enough in no time at all,” Ann said. “I felt great!”

A short time later, Ann beckoned Ken to come back over. He thought she was going to ask for another dance. Instead she whispered, “My friend Peggy can’t see and is a little afraid to go out there, but she used to love to dance. I know she would love it if someone would Waltz with her.” So, Peggy and Ken graced the dance floor.

“There are few things I find more rewarding in my job than watching people accomplish their goals” Ken smiled. “I didn’t get to sit down the entire night. I love Judson Park!”

Ann, Peggy and Ken are Livin’ It!

How Do You Value Gray?

“For thousands of years, elders were revered for their wisdom and experience because to reach old age was rare . . . they were survivors!” Dr. Roger Landry explained in a recent presentation at Village on the Green (a Lifespace Community). Too often, our current society ignores this vast resource that can be found among older adults. “Older adults are the solution to many of society’s challenges, and we need to harness that power. That can only happen if we take a more enlightened view of aging.”



The Valuing Gray Award was created by Masterpiece Living to recognize organizations that develop a system for leveraging the value, skills, talents and wisdom of older adults to solve society’s challenges. Submissions for the 2018 Valuing Gray contest begin January 22, making now the perfect time to begin planning your community’s entry. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more.

Resolutions that Work!

By: Dr. Roger Landry



With each New Year comes the dreaded New Year’s Resolution. We approach it as we do most things in our “take no prisoners” society. We resolve to make a dramatic change; we want it to happen quickly, and we want it to last. But the truth is that small steps are what lead to great, and lasting changes.

In his book *One Small Step Can Change Your Life*, Dr. Robert Maurer writes, “Instead of aggressively forcing yourself into a boot-camp mentality about change, give your mind permission to make the leaps on its own schedule, in its own time.”

The Japanese term for this is “Kaizen.” Kaizen is about small steps. It’s about asking ourselves small questions. “What is the first step I can take toward my resolution? What small change can I do in five minutes a day to work on my goal?” Little by little these changes become habit and a natural part of our lifestyle.