Faculty Holiday Advice brought to you by the Women Faculty Network


“*I view winter as a time for reflection and taking stock of our lives. I try to make sure I get time for hikes outdoors away from the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping. It’s a huge stress reliever and reminder to look inward, just as nature is doing around us as trees drop their leaves but continue to nourish themselves underground.* “– Emily Spence, PhD, MSW, Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Health Equity, Associate Professor


*“This is a special time of the year for families.  The feeling of being pulled in many directions is real. I like to focus on the saying: ‘Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.’   You are making memories that will last forever!”*  Dr. Janet Lieto, Associate Professor, TCOM



“*Use the Winter Break to totally disengage from work – as hard as it may be. With the university closed, we should all be away from our work and recharging*.” – Erika Thompson, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Public Health


“*Don't forget to find some 'me time' during these busy holidays. Whether it's getting lost in a good book, enjoying a peaceful walk, or just taking a few minutes to breathe. It is important to do what makes you feel refreshed and happy. Holiday seasons should include taking care of yourself. This isn't a luxury, it's essential, especially when things get a bit hectic. So, go ahead and treat yourself to those little moments of joy and relaxation - you deserve it*!” – Melissa Lewis, PhD, Associate Dean for Research & Faculty Advancement, Professor, School of Public Health


*“As kids grow and we settle into our adult life, you may find yourself alone during the holidays. Reach out to friends and family, watch a favorite movie or TV series, read, relax, walk in the park, go destination hiking, do things to reconnect with yourself and that bring you peace to keep alone time productive and positive.”* – Teresa Wagner, DrPH, Associate Professor, School of Public Health


*“For me, I maintain balance by not adhering to society's expectations regarding traditional holiday customs, particularly gift giving! Gift giving takes a lot of emotional labor, so I establish my own expectations and usually just buy a bunch of gift cards and let people pick their own gifts.”* – Stacey Griner, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health


*“Prioritize quality over quantity, outsource whatever you can and make some time to rest, reflect, and connect.”* --Adenike Atanda, PharmD, Assistant Dean of Student success and Academic Performance, Associate Professor, College or Pharmacy


“During this holiday season, do not feel guilty about practicing self-care. Take the time to do the things that truly feed your soul, and bring you inner peace and tranquility.” - Catherine Sembajwe-Reeves, Ed.D., M.A., Assistant Professor, Master of Health Administration (MHA) Program Director, School of Public Health


*“Carve out a space for you, be it physically, mentally, or both, and don’t forget to breathe. If things get hectic or overwhelming, find your space, close your eyes, and just breathe through it. You’d be amazed at how much a moment of stillness, and a few breathes can change your mood and ease tension.”*-Roxanne Zascavage, PhD, Assistant Professor, Microbiology, Immunology, and Genetics, School of Biomedical Sciences

 *“Remember that it is ok if everything does not go quite as planned and try to live in the moment. Some of my best holiday memories were completely unplanned.”* -Jennifer Cihlar, PhD, Assistant Professor, Center for Human Identification, Microbiology, Immunology, and Genetics, School of Biomedical Sciences


*“Take the holiday break to step completely away from work (including email), at least for a few days. The regenerative power of down time will lead to more productive and focused attention when you return to work after the break. Your family will also thank you!”* -Caroline Rickards, PhD, Associate Professor, Physiology & Anatomy, School of Biomedical Sciences


*“When you hear people talk about their holiday plans, most discussions mention joyous celebrations and quality family time. The holidays, as we know, can also contribute to increased stress around financials, relationships, and much more. I plan to give myself the grace to say no when needed, whether it's declining additional responsibilities at work or choosing a simpler holiday celebration. Mental and emotional health are invaluable, and by taking more time and better care of myself, I hope not to only survive the holiday season, but also find the capacity to genuinely enjoy and appreciate the moments that matter most.” -* Brittany P. Torres, Pharm.D., BCPS, Assistant Dean of Pharmacy Student Success and Wellbeing, and Associate Professor of Pharmacotherapy, HSC College of Pharmacy


*“I’m a huge proponent of planning and looking ahead so I start in October and sit down with my family to discuss what we want the holiday season to look like for us for that year. This plan will vary from year to year as priorities and activities change as well as what season of life we are in. For reference, I have a pre-teen and teenager. My husband, kids, and I discuss which traditions, events, and activities are important for us to continue that year and which are no longer a priority or can be reimagined. We review the following as an example-- Are we driving to another state this year for Thanksgiving or Christmas, both, or waiting until the summer to visit family?; Are we attending this family Christmas party, hosting this movie night, how many holiday parties will each of the kids get to attend with their friends?; Do we want family portraits for the Christmas card or are we sending out pre-made cards this year; When do we want to decorate the house? etc. After all of this has been determined, we communicate to family and friends the plan for the year, and I write everything down in my planner and on our family calendar. From there, we find at least two-three Saturday’s or entire weekends between October-December that we block for “no plans” so that we can decompress between all the holiday festivities, church, work events, sports, FFA, band, and other events. This then allows me to plan for work as well. It helps me to know that even if the week is planned with projects, meetings, school activities, or other events, I have pre-planned downtime to decompress or if I know I have a busy family week coming up, I will work more hours on work projects in the evening and weekend so that I won’t be overwhelmed the next week. They say it’s a balance but that’s false. It’s a season of activity that will ebb and flow with priorities and activities, but I try to have direct communication with my family so that they know mom will be working this weekend so that I can be fully present for your band concert, or we all have to work together on this project or chore so that we all can have downtime on Saturday to rest.”* – Misty Smethers, E.D., Associate Dean of High Impact Educational Practices & Student Services, School of Public Health