

Hello there and welcome. I am really excited about this topic today about creating health and joy during the holidays. I'm recording this in preparation to release it in that time between Thanksgiving and the new year. And I call this time, the space in between. And love this time of year. And I love it because I celebrate Christmas. And I really love the cheer and excitement and the singing and the connections and all of that. And I also love it because it truly is the perfect time, the perfect opportunity to level up in terms of personal growth and self-leadership.

Now, I know you might be rolling your eyes a little thinking, "Are you kidding me? I understand Tracy that the holidays are supposed to be fun. But they also are stressful, there's more to do, and not more time to do it. I'm going to be with people that I don't necessarily like being with and I'm used to being alone". Or maybe you might be thinking, "I'm not going to get to be with the people that I want to be with. And I'm feeling lonely". And then, of course, we have travel, new COVID variants, and all the normal stresses of our daily lives, we have the bigger challenges and smaller challenges.

And I'll tell you that they all matter whether we call them big, or whether we call them small. And sometimes I think that it is the smaller challenges those ankle-biters that really can send us over the edge and make us feel like we just cannot handle the holidays. And it is the same ankle biters that can help us to level up.

Now I'll tell you, I am practicing this with you. I just had my mom here, a fantastic trip, one of the best trips ever. And I loved it. I loved having her here and she also loves animals, loves feeding my new puppies scraps from the dinner table, which we do not do. And so, they had a little bit of diarrhea, and then she also is a smoker. And so, it was different. And I was really trying to figure out how to accommodate all of that. And I realized that these are not the biggest holiday challenges or the biggest challenges at all. But I want to talk today about how in the midst of this potentially stressful, quote-unquote time of year that we can take extraordinary care of ourselves and walk through it with consciousness instead of by default, instead of just saying, "This is how I do holidays, I've always gained weight, it's always been stressful, I'm just going to grin and bear it, I'm just going to get through this. And then in the new year, I'll begin again".

Instead of using that default, we can create something different. And I'll tell you, the crux of not wanting to create something different really is resistance. It's a resistance to the energy that we think it will take to be healthy during all the things that are going on. It's resistance to changing our own stories about the way that we have experienced things. And so really, this is about just laying down that resistance and considering a different story.

And to do that, we need to know what our current story is. What are you currently resisting or currently expecting that might be already causing some stress, maybe you're thinking about a work or family gathering and thinking, "There's no way I'm going to get through that without a couple of drinks"? Or perhaps you might be feeling the pressure of not being able to get the gifts that you want to get for people or not enough time to get everything and it's just going to be hectic and stressful until you get that done. Or whatever your story is identify it and notice what is going on with you. Because the first piece to creating a joy-filled and healthy holiday is to notice what it is that you are expecting and what story you're telling yourself about how it's going to be and then choosing a different story.

So fast forward through the end of the holidays, or through the end of any event. It doesn't have to be the holidays; it could be about travel or around a project or getting through a difficult period with your teenager or with your spouse. Go through that fast forward and imagine yourself on the other side of it looking back and thinking, "wow, I really kicked a little booty there". You might be thinking, "I really stuck to my protocol for eating and drinking" or "I was so kind and compassionate to Uncle Roy who normally drives me crazy". Or "I didn't fly off the handle and it was really neutral". Imagine that now and get that good, healthy, joyful energy flowing in you now. Flowing in your mind and flowing in your body. Start that now start the new story now.

Now there's a little caution here. As you're telling the story. It is not about changing the behaviors of other people and imagining how they behave differently, or they behave the way that you think that they should, it's not about me imagining that my mom suddenly, is going to start listening to me and not feed my dog scraps from the table, right? People are going to be the way that they're going to be, and this is about letting them be that way. Letting people be who they are going to be, and then imagining how you are going to have success with them acting just the way that they do. And maybe they're even going to act worse than they normally do. Imagine how you are going to have immense success and joy and help even in that environment.

When you do this when you dare to think about your old expectations and create new ones, it creates a little spark, a little hope, it gives you a little pep in your step. And that really is what this season and life is about being able to create that energy on your own despite the external circumstances. It requires a willingness or what I call a willingness to envision something different.

And if you have a hard time envisioning yourself having success during this season, or during a project or whatever it is for you, then maybe you can envision someone else who has had success. Think about them. Maybe somebody that you look up to or a mentor and then imagine you being that person almost like you are an actor in a role. Imagine what that person might do. Imagine what it might be like for you to be just like that. And this is really a lot of fun if you go through the practice of it. So that's the first step is fast-forwarding and envisioning what would be an amazing, healthy, and joy-filled experience for you.

And then the second piece to this is to plan and to write it down. And this is where people can sometimes tune out and roll their eyes. Like really, you want me to plan on top of my gift list and on top of my schedule, and on top of all the other things that I need to get done? And the answer is yes, yes, yes. Many people do not like to write things down. They're like, "Yep, I got it. I got it, Tracy, I got it in my head". And you might be thinking that "I know what my plan is, I don't need to write it down". Or "it's going to take way too long to write it down. And I don't have the time".

And I want you to know that the key here to the plan and to success is in simplicity. If your focus is to stay healthy over the holidays, it could be as simple as I'm not going to overeat. I can eat whatever I want, but I'm not going to overeat. I'm going to stop eating when I'm at a plus three on the hunger scale. And I'm only going to eat when I'm hungry. That's it, that could be your plan, and then write that down. It could be as simple as I'm going to have two cocktails at every party and no drinks at any other time. Or I'm just going to say no, "thank you" every time Uncle Roy asked me if I want a drink. And that's it. I'm just going to say no, "thank you". And then you write it down. And now you have a plan.

You get to write it down because you must remember it and revisit it. Remember what it is that you are committing to and keep that at the top of your mind. Sometimes I'll ask someone, did you make a plan around that event? And they'll say, "Yeah, I did. I made a plan". And I'll say, well, what was it? And they're, like, "I don't know, I forgot". So, it can be as simple as just putting a sticky note up on your bathroom mirror or writing it in the Notes app on your phone but write it down.

It's interesting because I just recommitted to our West Point Healthy Leader group that I was going to meditate and then get my heart rate up every day. And after I made that commitment, I did it on our Facebook group, I had to go back and look like wait, what was it that I committed to. And I had to write it down on my calendar so that I could remember.

It sounds a little silly, it's not that big a deal, but writing it down is really helpful and then reminding ourselves and reviewing it every day. Another thing that is helpful during the holidays or travel, or during a specific event, for remembering is to use your support system. It could be reaching out to a friend or to a Facebook group, or to listening to a message or a voice memo that you've created for yourself. You can also join the Healthy Leader Wellbeingness© private group that's on Facebook, and I'll put a link to it in the show notes. And I'll tell you that that group is still pretty small right now so it's a great opportunity to jump on sharing your plan, write it down. And if you have questions, I'll be happy to take a look at them. So, support yourself by designing a plan, making it simple, and writing it down.

And then the final tip about your plan is to really make sure that it is clear and that it makes sense to you. For clarity, I like to say make sure that your plan has the three Qs. As in quality, quantity, and frequency. So, for drinking the quality of the type of the drink. Be clear on what type of alcohol you're going to be drinking and how often that's the frequency and how much that's the quantity. And then in terms of it making sense makes sure makes sense to you. If your issue isn't about how much you drink but drinking too quickly, then maybe you might add pacing to your plan. You might say I'm going to have eight glasses of wine over the span of four hours and I'm going to have a glass of water in between each one so that you can pace yourself. So, make sure that your plan is simple, that it is germane to you, it makes sense to you, and that you have written it down.

A lot of people will say to me, "seriously, that's it, that's the plan doesn't it need to be much more strict or more complicated than that?" And it really doesn't, all it has to be is yours. You know what your challenges you know what your stressors are. So, creating a plan that will support you doesn't have to be elaborate. Or, in fact, I prefer that it's not elaborate, because the plan truly is there for you to be able to frame your actions and organize them. Make it simple, so that you have structure and so that you can have success and so that you can stay conscious at the moment when you need to implement your plan.

That brings us to the third piece of this puzzle and that is how can you follow through on your plan at the event and really beyond the event. And the biggest piece of this is actually being conscious and aware of yourself, and your thoughts, and your emotions, and your actions. And again, this is easier said than done, especially during the holiday season, when it is really easy to get caught up in the celebration, and the people and the drinking and the eating or to get caught up in the doing, and the gift list, and the gift-giving, and the places we have to be, and in the schedules.

It can feel overwhelming and it's very easy to get caught up in the external environment. So being conscious at the moment really is a balancing act. It's about enjoying and being aware of that external environment, while simultaneously being aware of yourself. And that is how you can use this time of year to not only keep your health and not gain weight and not overeat and not feel bad about how you handle something. But to actually practice that level of awareness of the external environment and the internal environment simultaneously. And when you do that, you're leveling up. You are leading yourself. You are deepening your relationship with yourself and with other people. Because when you are practicing consciousness of yourself, you're much more likely to practice consciousness with other people. To be present with them, to listen to them, to not prejudge them. And it does take being aware of how you're feeling in the moment. It takes being aware of yourself and checking in and noticing how you're feeling physically noticing your urges and your desires and being really curious about them.

And you strengthen the relationship with yourself by being conscious of your plan, and how you are implementing it. And one of the reasons that people don't like to even make a plan to start with is because they want to be able to be spontaneous at the moment, they want to enjoy themselves and go with the flow and not be worried about it. And I'll tell you that this is a very subtle, yet sneaky way for your brain to sabotage. For your brain to just go with the default, instead of having to be present. It's like giving yourself permission to go unconscious and not be responsible for yourself and for your actions and to not be responsible for taking care of yourself and enjoying both the moment and then the future moments when you can look back and know that you made your right decisions. And the whole point here is to be able to use the events that have been challenging in the past, to use them on purpose, and to be in the event, to be in the space and the time and also simultaneously be aware of yourself. To be curious about yourself and to lead yourself.

So, this is not about restriction, or denial, or shoulding on yourself. It's about opening up and giving yourself the gift of trust and connection and awareness right in the middle of the chaos. It's like having a private little secret with yourself. It's like you are your own buddy and you've got your back and you are witnessing and also engaging and enjoying the environment and the people and the situation and managing all of that and also being with you and noticing how you are being in the middle of it.

We resist having a plan around what we're going to eat or do or say because we call it restrictive. And that is not the case at all. Having boundaries and having plans and envisioning who we are going to give us the ultimate control.

It gives us bumpers like in the bowling alley. It helps us to make our right choices in the midst of that environment.

So, what can you do in the midst of having an urge? First and foremost, be armed with the understanding that that feeling of an urge or the strong desire to do something or to not do something does not control you. That feeling is not what controls you. It's a signal from your body that will pull you towards an action, you'll see a desert and you're going to be pulled to reach out and to grab it or you'll see the waiter and you're going to be pulled to signal to her and ask for another drink. Remember that those are sensations that your body has been trained to have and you have the ability, with your prefrontal cortex with your brain, to see them, and to say, "Aha, there you are, I was expecting you. And here is what we're going to do instead". That is where you get to implement your plan.

I also want to give you another little tip for what you can implement if you are having a strong urge. And it is a tool that I call the not-yet tool. And you just basically have the urge and say to yourself, "not yet". And then you give yourself 10 minutes. And then after the 10 minutes, if you're still having an urge, then you can go for it. But you start off by saying, "I see you, but not yet". And this is a great opportunity to check-in and see what is going on for you and to notice the external environment and your internal environment.

And for many people, just having this awareness and the consciousness is really all it takes. You take yourself out of automatic mode. And then once the urge is passed, I promise you, you're not going to feel like you have been denied or restricted all. You actually feel free. And what you're doing here is you're giving yourself some space, some consciousness in between the urge and your action. And that is a gift. That's an amazing gift to give yourself. It's the gift of consciousness.

And then the last thing I'll share here is that if you do over drink, or overeat, or get in a fight with your relatives, or end up working more than you had planned, use that information. Rewind and see what happened at that moment. What were you feeling? Were you able to keep it together for most of the evening, but then this happened, this person came, the situation changes, or were you able to keep it together at this one event, but not at another event and be curious and kind to yourself? Use the information and learn from it.

And I will tell you that as I go through all of this with you, which is so fun. It's such a delight that I am totally practicing this. I'll let you know that for our holiday season we have 17 or more people coming together in one Airbnb for an entire week.

And there are different political views, different stances on COVID, and masks and mandates. We have different backgrounds and ages, and stories, and history. And I am going through this process myself. I caught myself thinking about the potential for disagreements and how stressful some things might be. We've had family gatherings in the past, and not everyone left feeling good about themselves and one another. And then I went through this process. I fast-forwarded; I envisioned a different story. I imagined what it would be like at the end of the trip when everyone is gathering in the foyer with their suitcases and saying goodbye to one another. And I imagine how connected everybody felt. How connected I felt to everyone and how amazing it was to learn new things about people and life and how it would be to be closer and the upcoming year, and how we would want to do more things together and this next year. And I was just talking with my sisters this past week about the logistics of this trip, coordinating flights and travel and dinners and things like that. And we started to come up with a plan with fun ideas that would steer us towards connection. That would help the cousins be closer to one another. And we are going to be doing all sorts of fun things. We have an Olympic competition one day, we have ordered headbands, you know those old-fashioned wrists like sweatbands, those wristbands and knee socks, and we are going to decorate gingerbread houses and do puzzles, and we have a scavenger hunt. And we have planned we have designed the trip for connection, and I am so excited about it.

So that's it. This is how you can create help and joy during the holiday season and beyond. Notice the story that you're telling yourself right now and create a new one fast forward beyond the holidays beyond the event and look back and tell the story in the absolute best way that you can. How were you the best version of yourself and then design a plan to make that story come true? Write it down. Keep it simple and make sure that the plan really does belong to you and will help you feel better when you look back. And then when it comes time for the moment to follow through. Be conscious. Conscious of your external environment but mostly conscious of the internal environment, the relationship with yourself be present to you. That really will be the greatest gift of all that will keep on giving. It's an amazing meta-skill. So, give yourself the gift of self-care and connection and presence and help enjoy during this holiday season and forevermore.

Thank you all for listening. You guys create an amazing holiday season and an amazing space in between and create the very best you that you possibly can. Hey there if you are ready to take your Wellbeingness© to the next level. Come visit thewellness.coach I've got lots of free resources and make sure that you type in thewellness.coach not.com and I will see you there.