

## Low-Stress, High-Joy Holidays

With the holidays upon us now, we are acutely aware of the collateral toll that this season takes on many of us...especially parents. We feel the pressure to create holiday traditions and memories that our children will cherish, we are afraid to disappoint our families and friends, and we often run ourselves ragged in an effort to create the “magic” of the season. It doesn’t have to be this way. Please take a moment to read the [attached article](#) by Dr. Christine Carter from the Greater Good Science Center.

Briefly, her “Three Steps to a Low-Stress, High-Joy Holiday Season” are as follows:

- 1) **Prioritize Connection.** The many ways we re-connect—by sending holiday cards, coming together with friends and colleagues at parties, family holiday traditions—are the essence of the season. “All of this is about renewing our sense that we are a part of something larger than ourselves... This sense that we are connected and part of a larger whole is the single strongest predictor of happiness that we have.”
- 2) **Schedule the fun, the tasks—and the necessary downtime.** There isn’t enough time to do everything on your list, but don’t skip the downtime. Now more than ever, it is necessary to prioritize your time. More is not necessarily better.
- 3) **Trade in expectations for appreciation.** “Because we have so much, it becomes easy to take our good fortune for granted; as a result, we are more likely to feel disappointed when we don’t get what we want than to feel grateful when we do.”

At some point over our winter break, we hope you’ll have a chance to watch Gavin Pretor-Pinney’s TedTalk, “[Cloudy with a Chance of Joy](#),” and then, even more, that you’ll take a moment to step outside and marvel at the ephemeral beauty of the clouds yourself. As Pretor-Pinney puts it:

*You're not going to change the world by lying on your back and gazing up at the sky, are you? It's pointless. It's a pointless activity, which is precisely why it's so important. Sometimes we need excuses to do nothing. We need to be reminded by these patron goddesses of idle fellows that slowing down and being in the present, not thinking about what you've got to do and what you should have done, but just being here, letting your imagination lift from the everyday concerns down here and just being in the present, it's good for you, and it's good for the way you feel. It's good for your ideas. It's good for your creativity. It's good for your soul.”*

**Reconnect, appreciate, be present, and give your imagination the time it needs to soar—these are our holiday wishes for all of us.**

*The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples Guidance Department aimed to promote the well-being of our students and foster a positive, inclusive school community.*

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