

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

The Department of Homeland Security defines human trafficking as modern-day slavery that involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Tompkins County has become a Safe Harbour county in NY which indicates our commitment to raising awareness and to the coordinated response to youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking or who are vulnerable to it.

The welfare of youth that may be victims of exploitation or trafficking is dependent on awareness, paying attention to the signs, and your action(s) to help. Victims may look like anyone you encounter every day. Below you will find some helpful tips in identifying the signs that may point to a youth in need of intervention.

Characteristics:

- Chronic runaway/ homeless youth
- Injuries/ signs of physical abuse
- LGBTQ youth
- Not enrolled in school or has repeated absences
- Socially isolated
- Presence of another person (often older, who seems to be controlling)
- High number of sexual partners
- Not in control of their own money
- Tattoos that he/she/ze is reluctant to explain

Behaviors:

- Lying about age/ having fake ID
- Inconsistencies when describing and recounting events
- Unable or unwilling to give local address or information about parent(s)
- Exhibits fear, anxiety, depression, submissiveness, and or nervousness
- Expresses interest in, or is in, relationships with adults or older individuals

Possessions:

- Having things that they normally wouldn't
 - Excessive amounts of cash
 - Hotel key cards
 - Excessive jewelry or clothing
 - New electronic devices
 - Prepaid cell phone

Exploiters can be anyone including friends, family members, trusted adults, or someone who is claiming to have a romantic relationship with the youth. They target vulnerable youth and use psychological and physical manipulation to force them into a life of slavery.

If you suspect that a youth you have encountered is in an emergency situation, where the safety and welfare of the youth is in imminent jeopardy, contact 9-1-1 and report the situation.

If you need to discuss the case or would like to request free support contact **the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County** on their **24-hour hotline (607) 277-5000** or the office at **(607) 277-3203**.

For more information visit listentothesigns.org

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February – first thing you think of is love, romance, and chocolate!!
But did you also know February is **National Library Lover's Month!**

When was the last time you visited the library? Do you have a library card? Do your child(ren) have their own library card? It's never too late.

February is typically a dark, cold, and dreary month. Why not check out your local library and all the great activities and opportunities they offer during the month. Get yourself and child(ren) out of the house and have some fun, have a new adventure, make new friends, and enjoy.

Libraries are so much more than wood, stone and brick structures filled with books. They are a community hub, a gathering space, a safe place, a place of new experiences, adventures, research, and discovery.

Here are a few opportunities and activities offered at our local libraries.

- Discover amazing adventures and untold history
- Free internet access
- Free use of computer/laptop/tablet
- Cooking classes
- Teen programming (discussion groups, movie nights, lego nights, crafts, etc.)
- A quiet space to read, study, write, collect your thoughts
- Pre-school story time and activities
- Crafting nights for all ages
- Reading discussion groups for adults
- Free movie nights
- Book clubs for all ages
- A location for public forums
- Free meals for youth and families

- Offerings of a wide variety and selection of not only books, but audio books, ebooks, digital and paper magazines, movies and TV series
- Programming for seniors
- Art displays of local artists
- Local history archives
- Resources for writing papers, homework or self-education
- Book sales
- Various holiday events
- Opportunities to volunteer

So, shake off those winter doldrums and spend some time this month at your local library.

www.tcpl.org

www.newfieldpubliclibrary.org

www.trumansburglibrary.org

www.southworthlibrary.org

www.lansinglibrary.org

www.grotonpubliclibrary.net

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Tips for Parents of Teens with Depression

The teenage years are notoriously turbulent. Adolescents are doing more things independently, taking more risks socially, and possibly experimenting with drugs and alcohol. All this can come with emotional costs. So it can be complicated to tell the difference between the typical teen turmoil and a depressed teen. In early adolescence, boys and girls are equally affected by depression. But after puberty, girls are about twice as likely as boys to become depressed, and this ratio persists into adulthood.

The good news is that "a secure, warm, loving relationship with a parent can be a protective factor against depression, especially for girls," says Dr. Gene Beresin, executive director of the [Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Massachusetts General Hospital](#). Here are his eight tips for parents whose teens may be depressed.

Observe changes in your kids. Tune in to behavioral clues. A teen may shut down or have a personality change, such as becoming quieter, sadder, or more irritable. Other signs include teens who seem more spaced out and can't seem to focus, are less interested in usual activities, or may be using substances to self-medicate. "If you see changes in multiple areas of a kid's life, that's raising a red flag," Beresin says.

Notice patterns. If you see a major change in your teen's patterns, to the point where your child almost seems like a different person and it cuts across different situations, meaning it's happening at home, at school and with friends, this may point to a problem.

Get outside information. Find out from other people who know your teen - coaches, teachers, friends and parents of friends - whether your teen seems different around them. Teens may reveal more to someone else they trust than to their parents. Also, consider whether a major life stressor - if someone close has died, gotten sick, or is going through a divorce - could be triggering the behavior changes.

Talk with your kids. Have regular conversations with teens and younger children about what they are doing and how they are feeling. Be sure to ask probing questions but avoid grilling teens. Try having these conversations when the two of you are driving in a car, preparing dinner or watching TV. Let teens talk and listen to their responses, and make sure they feel heard and understood.

Open a door. Share an observation you've made with your teen, perhaps by saying "I've noticed that you're not sleeping as well" or "I've noticed that you're not going out with your friends as much." Then offer up, "If you'd like to talk about it..." Don't give up if teens shut you out initially, because it may be difficult for them to open up about their feelings, or they may be embarrassed to share them.

Discuss seeking professional help. If your teen talks about depression, acknowledge their sadness and pain so they know you are taking their feelings seriously. If a teen shuts down, suggest that you understand they may not feel comfortable talking with you, but you would like for them to talk to a health professional because you care. Parents can expect resistance to this idea, Beresin says.

Don't be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. "It's very important for parents to bring this topic up; it won't precipitate a suicidal act," Beresin says. If your teen is talking about suicide, hurting themselves, or being better off dead, take it seriously and get help immediately, he says.

Take a stance. If your teen's depression seems severe, or the teen appears to have a serious substance abuse problem or has made a suicide gesture, it's the role of the parent to take a stance, Beresin says. Insist the child see a mental health professional, and make the appointment. While some young people came to his office "kicking and screaming," extremely angry or upset with their parents for seeking help, once they got there, Berensin has found "most kids want to talk when given the opportunity."

Adapted from an article by Live Science @livescience

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Thank you in advance for forwarding this monthly message to all of your networks. More detailed versions of this message and all previous messages can be found at <http://www.healthyouth.org/monthly-messages.php>.



National Volunteer month in the United States takes place during April, though volunteering can be celebrated all year!

One of the greatest aspects of volunteerism is that there are so many different ways to do it and so many benefits. Those wishing to volunteer benefit by learning new skills, keeping active, improving social skills, making new friends, making you feel good and useful, and teaches you what really matters. It doesn't matter if you can only volunteer for one day or one hour, every minute can make a difference and is greatly appreciated. You don't need to be super talented or hold great skills; all you need is a little time and the desire to help. Every act of volunteerism deserves to be applauded.

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes, ages, and backgrounds. The common thread is that they want to make a difference, whether it helps one person or a whole community. And at the end of the day, the world is a just a little better.

Don't forget to take a moment and thank a volunteer.

Here are just a few ideas of ways to volunteer:

- Local library – *help with shelving books, read stories to children, help run a craft project, fundraising*
- Nursing home – *offer to read to the residents, spend some time with a resident that does not have any family local*
- Clean up your neighborhood – *walk up and down your street picking up the trash*
- Neighborhood park – *pick up the trash on the lawns, make piles of the fallen sticks and tree limbs, rake the leaves into a pile*
- Food bank – *help package up boxes, sort canned goods*
- Church – *help with coffee hour, help clean, offer to make repairs, landscaping*
- Coaching – *offer your time to coach a neighborhood kids team, help organize teams*
- Community events – *clean-up, set-up, handing out flyers, picking up trash*
- Local youth serving agencies – *help with an event planned, share a talent, fundraising*
- Don't have any extra time – *donations are always welcome, monetary or materials*

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Elliott and I flew home to spend a few days with Grandma...so on the plane, we were seated next to an 18-year-old kid who had never flown before and he asked us to hold his hand because he was scared. Elliott spent the entire flight checking on him, telling him not to be scared, this part is a little fast, but you can do it, etc. So right before we landed, Elliott whispered to the kid "When I get scared, I say to myself 'I'm a fluffy cloud. I'm a fluffy cloud.' You should try that, it might help."

So on our way off the plane, we learn that this kid is part of a large group of kids being shipped off at that very moment to their very first day of Navy boot camp... so on the way out of the jet bridge, I heard our new friend saying "I'm a fluffy cloud. I'm a fluffy cloud...." Oh man. Elliott came out of the womb with a 99th percentile sized head and a 100th percentile sized heart

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Happy Flag Day!

On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress created the standard for the American flag as consisting of thirteen stripes, alternating between red and white. In addition, there would be thirteen stars, one for each of the original colonies, on a field of blue. Over the years, the flag has changed. As new states were added to the union, additional stars were added on the field of blue

June 14th of every year is designated as Flag Day in the United States. Flag Day marks the day when Congress adopted the flag of the United States as the official national flag in 1777. While not a federal holiday, Flag Day is still an important occasion. Cities throughout the nation hold parades and events to celebrate. The President of the United States issues a proclamation urging citizens to fly the American flag during the week. Flag Day is a wonderful occasion to teach children about flag etiquette..

When displaying the flag, there should be light on it at all times. This includes sunlight or another source of light. This is the reason outdoor flags are raised at many government institutions at sunrise and lowered at sunset. When lowering the flag, it should never be allowed to touch the ground.

If you display the American flag with another flag on the same pole, the U.S. flag should be above the other flag. If hanging a flag vertically the blue/white star field should be upper left.

When the flag needs repair, it should be mended and restored to its original condition. However, if it is no longer possible, it should be burned with dignity or properly folded and sent to the American Legion, [Boy Scouts](#), or [Girl Scouts](#). These organizations perform proper retirement ceremonies for old flags.

When to fly the American flag at half-mast: <https://www.usa.gov/flag>

- Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
- National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day – July 27
- For thirty days after the death of a president – both current and former
- For ten days after the death of a vice-president, speaker of the house, or chief justice
- The days between the death and burial of a Supreme Court judge, former vice-president, state or territory governor, or military department secretary

To learn more about the American Flag go to USflag.org

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Summer Celebrations

There are many festivals, block parties, concerts, and celebrations during the summer. Teens look forward to these events and some are considered a rite of passage for teens as they attend these events with friends and peers unsupervised by the adults in their lives.

These events are enjoyable and worthwhile experiences, but they can also pose risks for teens that are curious and eager for new experiences. As parents, it is important to engage your teen in conversation around how they will make safe and healthy choices while at these summer events. Communicating with your teen about alcohol and drug use is especially important.

Things to consider:

- Talk to your teen about alcohol and drug use at events they will be attending, including strategies for how they will handle situations where s/he is offered alcohol or other drugs
- Communicate with other parents
- Ask questions and set boundaries
- Communicate with your teen about how you expect them to behave
- Encourage your teen to consider their future. How will the decisions they make today affect their future?
- Be available to your teen and let them know you will be there if they run into trouble or find themselves in a situation that makes them feel unsafe
- Make sure your teen has safe transportation
- Maintain communication with your teen during the event and if possible, identify an adult (perhaps another parent) who would be present and available if needed

Help to make your teen's summer a safe and fun experience. Keep the communication lines open!

For more information regarding safety, rules around alcohol and underage drinking and other parent tips visit Community Coalition for Healthy Youth on the web

at: http://www.healthyouth.org/practical_tips.php#events

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Tips for Dealing with Kindergarten Anxiety

With August comes heat and the approach of the upcoming school year. Kindergarten represents the beginning of formal schooling. For many this can represent a time of high anxiety for young people and adults alike. Before the start of the school year take time to prepare by following some of these helpful tips below:

1. Listen/talk to your child.

As a parent/guardian you may have your own concerns about the start of kindergarten these must take a backseat to the concerns that your child may have. Children may not be able to words to all their feelings and so it is important to help them label feelings as they arise.

2. Share your experiences.

Share your personal feelings of nervousness. This help the child not feel so alone and may give words to feelings they are having. If your young person begins to talk and relate stop and listen, there may e ah ha moments as they process what is being said.

3. Play school.

Play offers the chance to practice situations before they arise. This strategy can greatly increase the likelihood that there will be some comfort level with school related activities and circumstances. Be patient, set rules and boundaries, and have fun.

4. Visit the new school and classroom.

Familiarizing the young person with the environment can offer a sense of ease because they are not just imagining the surroundings. Having concrete examples of what the classroom looks like or the hallways or the playground will also offer a chance to dialogue about the real environment in a real way.

5. Read books about school.

Stories are a great way to explore emotions and open conversations. From the perspective of another character children can explore problem solving skill, coping skills, and a host of other social skills that they may not have experienced before. They can imagine and think about ways in which they can do what the characters are doing and explore without feeling that there is any danger.

6. Write a letter to the teacher.

Writing a letter or drawing a picture to the teacher can help to build a relationship with the teacher as well as offer an opportunity for your young person to express themselves. Encourage them to ask questions in the letter and to share information about themselves.

7. Get together with classmates.

If you are aware of other in the class, see if they will meet at a park and play. Going into the classroom having met other children can greatly decrease anxiety

on the first day. Socializing with new children can be difficult especially in an unfamiliar environment so having time to do this outside of the classroom helps eliminate this as a major hurdle to overcome

8. Develop a goodbye routine.

Developing a routine is important for both you as a parent/guardian and your child. Children are more successful at making difficult transitions when they know what to expect. Once you have developed the routine practice it so that there are no surprises that first day. Most importantly, stick to it. Children will be more successful at transitioning if there are clear expectations that are followed.

9. Send in a comfort object.

This strategy can help to remind the child that they are not alone and ease some anxiety. Brainstorm items that your child would like to take and make sure the item does not violate school policies.

10. Stay calm.

Your fears are not their fears. It is important to reflect on what makes you anxious about their first day and then deal with it outside of your child's presence. They will pick up on your anxiety and this could lead to them feeling like something about this new adventure is unsafe. So, keep calm and talk about school as if it is a safe place to be.

Adapted from: <https://www.coffeecupsandcrayons.com/10-ways-to-ease-kindergarten-anxiety/>

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As the long days of summer come to an end, few of us escape the air of general anticipation ushered in by the cooler weather, autumn colors, and more frequent school bus sightings.

As many of us shift from our more flexible summer routines to the frenzied beginning of the academic year, it's important to establish or re-establish family sleep routines, especially for those children and teenagers returning to school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides the following tips as the new school year begins:

- Getting enough sleep is critical for a child to be successful in school. Children who do not get enough sleep have difficulty concentrating and learning as well as they can.
- Set a consistent bedtime for your child and stick with it every night. Having a bedtime routine that is consistent will help your child settle down and fall asleep. Components of a calming pre-bedtime routine may involve a bath/shower, reading with them, and tucking them in and saying good-night to them.
- Have your child turn off electronic devices well before bedtime.
- Try to have the home as quiet and calm as possible when younger children are trying to fall asleep.
- Insufficient sleep is associated with lower academic achievement in middle school, high school and college, as well as higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness. The optimal amount of sleep for most younger children is 10-12 hours per night and for adolescents (13-18 year of age) is in the range of 8-10 hours per night.

Teenagers are notorious for disrupted or inconsistent sleep routines. According to Johns Hopkins sleep expert Laura Sterni, M.D., natural cognitive and physiological changes are in process that demand more sleep yet make it more difficult for teenagers to fall asleep before 11 p.m. Sleep deprivation is common in teens given this and their hectic academic, extracurricular, and personal schedules.

The following teen-specific tips are provided by Johns Hopkins Medicine:

- **Start the day in sunshine.** Having breakfast outside or by a sunny window helps regulate the body's biological clock, making it easier for teens to wake up in the morning and drift off at night.
- **Encourage the connection.** When your teen is well-rested, ask how they felt that day while taking a test or playing a sport. Help *them* come to the conclusion that sleep improves their outlook—and help them realize how much sleep is enough.
- **Tie good sleep to car privileges.** Sleep deprivation in teens can lead to accidents. For example, tell your teenager that they can't drive to school in the morning if they are not getting enough sleep.

- **Help teens rethink their schedule.** If your teen typically starts homework after evening activities, help them find an earlier time to get started. Ultra-busy schedules may require paring down.
- **Encourage afternoon naps.** Tired teens may benefit from a 30- to 45-minute nap before dinner. This is a better fix for sleep deprivation in teens than sleeping-in, which throws off their body's sleep cycle.
- **Ban tech from the bedroom.** Using tech at night not only cuts into teens' sleep time, it also exposes them to a type of light that suppresses the body's production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, making it tougher to fall asleep.

Best wishes for the start of the school year and happy sleeping!

For more helpful tips regarding back to school and sleep visit:

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/Back-to-School-Tips.aspx>

John Hopkins Medicine

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy-sleep/sleep-better/teenagers-and-sleep-how-much-sleep-is-enough>

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Tips and Tricks for The Holiday of Tricks and Treats

For many, their favorite Fall childhood memories come from Halloween. Pumpkins, costumes and the thrill of trick-or-treating. Of course, not everyone celebrates this tradition, though the decorations and décor is everyone. And for some adults with fearful kids, Halloween is more about pumpkin flavoring and avoiding the decorations, costumes, and all that is Halloween.

Fear is a natural thing and here are a few tips that may help get your loved ones through this Fall season:

Don't minimize a child's fears.

It is helpful to recognize that there is a reality in fear. Halloween can be a scary time. As young people are exploring the world, monsters and bloody eye balls may not seem super festive. According to experts at Bradley Hospital, young children have a growing-and vivid-imagination and are often unable to differentiate between what's real and what's pretend. That's why they may suddenly become fearful of objects or events that they did not seem to mind only months earlier or are very frightened by trick-or-treaters dressed up in scary costumes. Allow your child to share some of his or her fears and acknowledge the fear as something that is valid. The fear, however unfounded, is causing real anxiety. Offer support and comfort and use a calm voice and reassuring words.

Start preparing your child for Halloween early.

It is impossible to keep your child in a bubble for the entire month of October. Instead of avoiding Halloween, help prepare your child. Tell your child that during this time of year, and on Halloween in particular, people find it fun to dress up like scary things. Let them know that the monsters and scary creatures they will see are not real. If you see scary decorations in the shops – demystify them as you are able, encourage the child to touch and feel them to see how fake they feel.

If you do celebrate Halloween, don't get too attached to those cute little costumes.

This tip is geared towards people with toddlers in their lives. While you your toddler might plead with you to buy that perfect costume, they may also refuse to wear it on Halloween. Youngsters are moody. What is exciting one week – is boring the next. To spare the frustration – keep your expectations for Halloween low. Be flexible with costumes – and have a backup from the dress up bin.

We wish you a great fall season and hope this tips and tricks help make the end of October a tad less stressful for all!

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November is Child Safety Protection Month. The goal of Child Safety Protection Month is to create awareness about the potential dangers children face in everyday situations and to use this new knowledge to prevent any dangers. We try to protect our kids from all of the dangers of the outside world, but sometimes we forget about the dangers that kids face in their own homes. Childhood accidents can put your kids' lives at risk.

Parent Guide News recommends the following safety precautions:

1. **Use safety gates.** Even before your baby crawls, install safety gates to match your home and protect curious children from harm. Hardware mounted gates should be installed at the top and bottom of the stairs.
2. **Prepare for bedtime:** Remove all soft, fluffy and loose bedding from the baby's sleep area. This includes pillows, blankets, quilts, bumper pads, sleep positioners, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft products.
3. **Be mindful of plants.** Choose decorative plants that are nontoxic. Common household plants can often cause serious sickness.
4. **Update your exterior.** Place a welcome mat outside your home or apartment. Pesticides and other toxins may be carried inside on the soles of people's shoes.
5. **Keep things tidy.** Storage bins offer a great way to store toys and baby supplies, preventing anyone from tripping.
6. **Get creative.** Hand paint electrical outlet covers to blend into walls. Install door knob covers as a means to keep little hands from opening doors.
7. **Lock it up.** Put locks on anything and everything that can open.
8. **Be cautious of choking hazards.** Be vigilant about coins, marbles, keys, jewelry, paper clips, water bottle tops, safety pins, and removable rubber tips on doorstops, jeweled decorations on children's clothing, crayons, and hard and round foods.
9. **Check out your furniture.** Use angle braces or anchors to secure large furniture to the wall. Place TVs, VCRs and stereo systems on lower furniture, as far back as possible.
10. **Hot water:** Set hot water heaters no higher than 120 degrees F. A lower water temperature reduces the chance of scald burns. Munchkin's White Hot Super Safety Bath Ducky can help you manage the temperature of water in your children's baths.

November is the perfect time to check on your house before the busy holiday months come. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Child Injury Report an estimated 9.2 million children annually have an emergency department visit for unintentional injury. As a parent or guardian you can never be too busy for safety.

For more child safety information visit:

<http://www.parentguidenews.com/Articles/NovemberBringsChildSafetyPreventionMonth>



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Tips to Manage Family Stress During Children's Holiday Breaks

The holiday season is widely recognized as a time for celebration, family gatherings, and breaks from school and/or work to begin the new year with a fresh perspective.

For adults, this time of year may mean a couple of days off or leaving the office early. However, for parents, this time of year almost always means navigating the time off from school of their children, which can be anywhere from a week to several weeks. Efforts to schedule activities or alternate care to address this time off can be a source of added stress for some families during a time of year that might already be laden with other stress inducing tasks and situations.

Dr. Hollie Sobel of the Family Institute encourages parents to use school breaks as opportunities to teach their children time management and stress the importance of balancing work and play.

Dr. Sobel provides the following tips for managing this balance while kids are home from school over holiday break:

- **Balance Structure and Freedom:** Maintain a structure that includes a bedtime/curfew and a wake-time, but don't be too rigid. Studies show that keeping your bed and waking times within one to two hours of your daily routine during breaks shouldn't interfere with your regular schedule.
- **Plan Ahead:** Parents' schedules are important, and often not as flexible. Remember to plan play dates ahead of time, work with other parents and/or family members to plan outings, and coordinate vacation time with spouses or other caretakers. Planning ahead can make the holiday break run more smoothly and reduce stress.
- **Recognize Teachable Moments:** Take the time off as an opportunity to teach your kids time management, organizational, and independence skills. For example, parents with young children can create stations in their homes where their kids can draw for a portion of their time, play with blocks for another portion, and so on, teaching them to move from one activity to another without requiring continuous monitoring by a parent.
- **Balance Family and Friends:** Encourage less social children to reach out to peers and get out of the house. Look for activities that might suit them, or help them send texts or call friends to initiate plans. For overly social children, try to ease the anxiety that can come with trying to fill every moment with a social activity by encouraging moderation and balance.

- **Develop Traditions and Rituals:** Having traditions and rituals help build family cohesion. Research shows that high levels of family cohesion and support are related to good coping skills. Use the holiday break to build meaningful, memorable moments with your kids.

Visit https://www.socialworktoday.com/news/dn_122313.shtml for this article and more helpful stress management tips.

We wish you a joyous holiday season and a healthy new year!

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