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# November / December 2021 Newsletter

# Offering support, care, and hope…*right here at home!*

# All Support Group Meetings and Newsletter Folding are Cancelled Until Further Notice!

We are continuing to work behind the scenes to make sure the telephone calls, emails, and office needs are being handled. It is important to us that we provide up-to-date information on our website and Facebook page for you. Please stay safe and stay well!

Send your email address to officemanager@tristatems.org to receive newsletters.

**The Mission of the Tri-State Multiple Sclerosis Association**

**is to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with MS & their families in**

**Southern IN, Southern IL & Western KY**

**Gift of Giving Ornament Fundraiser, at the Little Green Apple , Hallmark**

Located in the Bell Oaks Center, 8449 Bell Oaks Drive, Newburgh, IN, 47630, 812-853-8761

Purchase the **Gift of Giving Ornament** from now to Christmas for $7.99, and $4.00 of the purchase price will be donated to TSMSA. Purchase the Gift of Giving ornament **Tuesday, November 23 thru Sunday, November 28 (Closed on Thanksgiving), and you will receive 20% off your total purchase** (excluding the ornament).

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**You have till the end of November to take part in the Azzip Pizza Fundraiser!**

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**Take Care of Yourself During the Holidays Susan Reynolds RN, MSCN**

**It’s that time of year again. It’s time for the all of the holiday hustle and bustle! As a person with MS, I usually dread the fatigue I know I will always feel during the holidays. I have had MS for 31 years, and I do better and better with the holidays now that I am older and better at saying “no”. I always look forward to getting together with family and friends this time of year, but some people with MS can become overwhelmed with all of the holiday expectations.**

**One of the best things you can do for yourself this time of year is relaxing your expectations. If your MS is acting up, make sure to take care of yourself first. Just say “no” to over-scheduling at Christmas time. Be easy on yourself, and don’t worry about having a perfect house. Have your holiday get together at someone else’s house! I talked to some MS “old timers” who have no problem with the holidays because they have made it known to their families what they can and cannot do.**

**Start your holidays with a “to do” list. IF possible, delegate as much of the running as you can. Shop online. Don’t wrap presents; put them in the gift bags that are so popular now. Keep gift giving simple by buying gift cards. Acknowledge your MS and ask for help. People are not necessarily aware of your symptoms and may be too distracted to notice, especially since people with MS have invisible symptoms.**

**For patients with MS, eating different foods around the holidays can affect the digestive system and result in constipation or gastrointestinal problems. Drinking too much alcohol may not be a good idea for other reasons. Alcohol may increase the**[**side effects of medications**](about:blank)**, such as drowsiness and memory issues.**

**Above all, please remember to continue taking your disease modifying therapy during the holidays. Many MS patients skip a day or two during the holidays because they are too tired to take a shot. It is very important to keep up the regime that you always do during the rest of the year. Don’t skip doses!!!**

**The holidays can trigger a range of feelings, and having MS can make a person more likely to experience depression. Remember to set realistic goals for yourself. Don’t put all of your energy into one day, try to pace yourself over the holidays. If you are lonely, volunteering some time to help others puts things into perspective. Spend your time with supportive and caring people. Live and enjoy the present.**

**Do whatever it is you do to keep yourself connected spiritually during the holidays. Remember the reason for the season! Be grateful for what you have. Research shows that people who practice gratitude have more energy and optimism. They are less bothered by everyday hassles, are more resilient in the face of stress, have better health and suffer less depression than the rest of us. The holidays are a great time to aspire to that state of mind.**

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**Wishing you the very best in 2022!**

***Debbie, Linda, Susan, and***

***The Tri-State MS Association Board of Directors***

**5 Tips for Dealing with Toxic Stress** **By Dr. John Delony**

November 3 is *National Stress Awareness Day*, and I don’t know a single person who hasn’t been deeply stressed over the past few years. Maybe as you’re reading this, you’re on coffee number four or still trying to process the latest scary economic news headline. But what if I told you stress itself is actually not the problem?

That’s right. Stress is good for us. Feeling stressed during performances or work events shows that your body and brain are working. They’re taking care of you and making sure you’re prepared to achieve your goals. It’s normal and good to be stressed when you’re taking tests or giving a presentation because when you get stressed, your body kicks into “fight, flight or freeze” mode, and you go about solving (confronting or avoiding) the challenge.

But your body can’t handle being in fight, flight or freeze all day every day. If stress is pervasive (you’re stressed about multiple things) and persistent (you’ve been stressed for a long time), your stress may become toxic. So today, I want to help you identify and work through toxic stress.

**What Is Toxic Stress?**

Toxic stress is the result of having too much going on at once and being in fight, flight or freeze mode for so long that our bodies finally say, “Enough!”

We know we’re dealing with toxic stress when we start feeling like everything’s pointless. We start isolating ourselves or choosing addictive actions like drinking, doing drugs or inhaling every gummy worm, burger and bag of chips we can get our hands on (been there). Toxic stress can result in numerous physical and psychological issues like high blood pressure, heart problems, inability to focus, anxiety, depression and a whole lot more.

But there is a healthy way to deal with stress and pursue wellness no matter how many stressors you have — so here are my top five tips.

**How to Deal with Toxic Stress**

Before you reach for the carbs and try to numb out your feelings with 10 hours of “Law and Order” or endless internet scrolling, do one or all of these five things:

***1. Write down what’s stressing you out***

Sometimes getting it all out of your head and onto paper can make a world of difference, so go ahead and make a list of everything that’s contributing to your feelings of stress. Once you see it all laid out, you’ll be able to make informed choices about what you can deal with today, what doesn’t need to be addressed today, and what’s out of your control.

***2. Learn to control your thoughts and actions***

The only things you truly have control over are your own thoughts and actions — and yes, you can learn to control your thoughts.

Thoughts will automatically come into your mind (you can’t control that), but you can control what you do with them once they’re in there. My favorite strategy when I’m hit with a thought I don’t like, I loudly say “nope” and then intentionally think of something better. It’s awkward and a discipline that takes time to learn, but it is possible.

Since you can control your actions, you can also choose what you do and what you focus on. You can stop reading the news and start a gratitude journal instead. You can choose to go for a walk outside instead of listening to so many true crime podcasts that you start thinking everyone you know is a serial killer.

***3. Take care of your health***

Mental, physical and spiritual health are all interwoven and connected, so when you do something that’s good for your body, you’ll also help your mind and soul, and vice versa. A few simple ways to take care of your health are eating well, exercising (just move your body—it doesn’t have to be CrossFit), journaling, spending time in meditation and prayer, and getting plenty of sleep.

***4. Invest in relationships***

We all need to have other people in our lives. Stress can make us want to isolate ourselves and tune out the world, but relationships and community are absolutely essential to us as human beings.

You’ve heard of an emergency fund for your finances — well, people are an emergency fund for life. Find ways to actively connect with people, whether that’s having dinner with a friend, visiting your family, or joining a club or group with people who share your interests. I get that relationships aren’t always easy, but they’re worth your time—I promise.

***5. Seek professional help***

If you’re struggling to identify what’s making you feel stressed, or you’re experiencing addiction, out-of-control thoughts or toxic relationship patterns, find someone to talk to. A professional can help you figure out the why behind your feelings and unpack any trauma you may or may not know you have.

At the end of the day, know that you’re not crazy, damaged or alone. In most cases, you are normal, and there’s a light at the end of the tunnel. So put in the work it takes to be well. **You’re worth it!**

***Dr. John Delony****is a mental health expert with PhDs in Counselor Education & Supervision and Higher Education Administration from Texas Tech University. Prior to joining Ramsey Solutions in 2020, John worked as a senior leader, professor, and researcher at multiple universities. He also spent two decades in crisis response, walking with people through severe trauma. Now as a Ramsey Personality, he teaches on relationships and emotional wellness. Follow John on*[*Twitter*](about:blank)*,*[*Instagram*](about:blank)*,*[*Facebook*](about:blank)*and*[*YouTube*](about:blank)*or online at*[*www.johndelony.com*](http://www.johndelony.com)

**We are updating 2022 Newsletter mailing list. Please include this form with your survey!**

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