SWEET Success

California Diabetes and Pregnancy Program

Tip of the Month
~ # 14~

Reduce STRESS
Tap into Spirituality

In this holiday season, when the culture is pressuring us to spend more money and have more possessions, you can offset that message in your patient appointments by offering a different kind of "holiday cheer". Many Americans create and support ways of being spiritual, and that "spirituality" (in whatever form) can be a tool to reduce stress.

All religious practices have tenets within them with stress-reducing potential. You do not have to tout a certain way of being religious in order to offer stress-reducing (and spiritual) choices.

"How do you celebrate this season?" is a generic way to invite someone to share her traditions. You may hear something that sounds familiar or learn something about a different cultural tradition. Either one builds relationship, is supportive and focuses on non-consumer aspects of the season.

"Communicating with the sacred" can take any form a person wishes, from worshipping in an institution to meditation to lighting a candle in a window. [Even the benefits of praying have been supported by research and shown to improve physical health.] Any of these forms has the potential to reduce stress by providing a sense of wellbeing, connection to self and others, and a link to higher values and deeper meanings. There is also research that has found that those who are more "grateful" sleep better, are more optimistic and energetic, and maintain better relationships (1).

If you do not feel comfortable talking directly about these options, you can "be" what you believe in. At this time of year, what better way to support our moms in reducing their many holiday stresses than to simply embody the qualities of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and gratitude.

Thank you for supporting your Sweet Success moms.

(1) Emmons & McCullough, 2003, "Counting Blessings vs. Burdens"