Many students at this time of year feel stressed about midterms or finals as well as juggling academics, finances, jobs, family and other obligations. And, on top of the pandemic’s challenges, get-togethers and the pressure to be merry, it’s easy to feel more jangled than joyful. That’s why it’s especially important to take care of yourself during this season: get enough sleep, eat regular well-balanced meals, exercise, spend time with friends and limit alcohol, caffeine and nicotine use. Here are more ways to dial down the stress:

- **Sit quietly, pause and focus on your breathing.**
  “Belly breathing”, taking slow deep breaths that completely fill your lower belly. Exhale naturally. This basic tool of mindfulness is a proven way to help calm anxious feelings, cope with emotional challenges, and clear your head.

- **Adjust your outlook.**
  Feeling down about a disappointing grade or something else that’s not going right? Reminding yourself of what you’re grateful for or makes you feel good can spark hopefulness and motivation.

- **Remember, this stressful season will pass.**
  Focus on the fresh semester ahead when you can resume your routine and focus more fully on your academic goals.

- **Make holiday gatherings run more smoothly.**
  Changing family dynamics and different viewpoints are just a few of the challenges you may face. Keep these tips in mind:
  - **Limit screen time and make an effort to engage with family members.** Talk about what you’re learning in class and suggest fun or enriching activities to share together like playing board games, watching a funny movie, taking a hike, or volunteering at a local shelter.
  - **If you’re staying with family for a period of time, stock up on groceries.** This is especially important if you’ve developed specific food preferences (vegetarian, etc.). Offer to prepare your portion of the meals.
  - **Try to sidestep any squabbles.** If things get heated, step outside for a breather.
  - **Treat yourself to time alone to recharge.** Look up old friends, stop in a local book store or gym, or drop in a yoga class.

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