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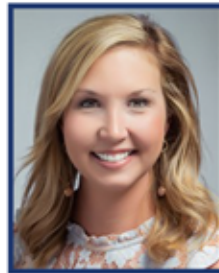
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▶ publisher's note: dees hinton

Embracing Change
and Looking Forward to
2021
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We look forward to what 2021 will bring! We look forward to getting to know more of you (albeit it may be by Zoom), sharing your stories, and promoting and enhancing your businesses and the industry. We also look forward to when we can gather again for an event!

Although much has changed this year, one thing remains constant – God's love for us and the reason we celebrate this season – his Son Jesus! Be sure to take time to enjoy your family and friends, rest, and regroup and we will see you in the new year!


Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Dees



As 2020 comes to a close, it's a good time to reflect on what we have been through this year. So much has changed in the way we live our everyday lives and in the way we do business. Even though many of us have been challenged in more ways than one, the real estate industry has continued to grow and prosper.

We at *Central Mississippi Real Producers* have also grown and adjusted to the "new normal" of doing business by making sure we are readily accessible online.

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STEVE HOUCK

SELLING JACKSON, ONE HOME AT A TIME

► top producer | Written by Susan Marquez • Photography by Abe Draper Photography

When Steve Houck says he knows Jackson, he really knows Jackson. “I live two miles from St. Dominic Hospital, where I was born,” he says. “I’ve lived here all my life. That makes me qualified to sell anything in the Jackson area, as I was raised here and I’ve watched it grow.”

Steve grew up helping his parents in the children’s clothing store they opened in 1950. Those who grew up in Jackson remember Houck’s Young Fashions in Maywood Mart. Steve eventually took over the store and ran it for several years. “I loved customer service, and I loved meeting so many people in the store over the years.”

After graduating high school from Jackson Prep, Steve attended

Mississippi College in Clinton. He operated Houck’s until 1998, when he made the decision to close the store. “It had become a dinosaur,” Steve explains. “There weren’t many stores of its type left. Retail had changed and the store became obsolete.”

That is when Steve got into real estate. “I wanted to stay in customer service,” Steve says. “Several of my customers were in real estate, and many of them suggested that I should go into the field. The ones who really guided me were Elaine Nix, of Nix Tann Realty, a broker named Bill Smith, and Judy Wahba, who later became my business partner.” Judy was Steve’s business partner for seventeen years before she passed away.

“Her death was a big blow for me. I still miss her.”

Steve attended the Mississippi REALTOR® Institute and got his license in 1998. “I went with a commercial broker, Bruce Payne, at Payne Realty,” he says. Working with Payne, Steve realized that he would much rather focus on residential real estate than commercial.

Steve says he loves everything about selling real estate. “It really is my passion,” he says. “I’ve made friends with so many of my clients, and I love to keep in touch with them.” One of Steve’s most treasured items is a trophy he received from Google. It came with a letter explaining that



“ I AM A NEW CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR, AND WATCHING THESE HOMES BEING BUILT IS LIKE WATCHING A NEW HOME BEING BORN.



“ I’VE MADE FRIENDS WITH SO MANY OF MY CLIENTS, AND I LOVE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THEM.

only ten percent of REALTORS® have as many Google reviews as Steve has, and all his reviews are five stars, which is as good as it gets. “That meant a lot to me. I really love what I do. No two days are alike for me, and that’s something I really like. I don’t know if I could ever go back to working within four walls all day after doing what I do now.”

Now a broker and owner of Real Estate Partners, LLC located on Towne Center Boulevard in Ridgeland, Steve has found one of his real estate niches in new construction. “I’ve been selling homes in Woodscape of Oakfield, located in Madison County. “I am a new construction supervisor, and watching these homes being built is like

watching a new home being born.” Steve works under Bruce Kirkland, a licensed construction supervisor who oversees his work. “We have twenty homes currently under development with more lots going in. We hope to have another twenty soon. These homes, at this price point (mid-\$200,000s), are so popular that we sold seven at the slab stage.”



Steve admits there are several advantages for REALTORS® in today’s market, including record-low interest rates. “I read a report recently that says Jackson, Mississippi is the second most affordable place in the United States to buy a home.” There are challenges, however. “Right now, our inventory of homes is extremely low. There were 1,215 homes listed

on the MLS the other day, and typically we have 3,500 this time of year. Many of the homes listed have four or five offers on them, so it’s incredibly competitive right now.” Construction-wise, Steve says the cost of building materials is going through the roof. “With the wildfires out west, the cost of lumber is about to go up even more.”

When not selling real estate, Steve spends time with his family. “I married my wife, Cherry, eight years ago. We are now raising our nine-year-old niece and eleven-year-old nephew. I am not sure if that is making me younger or older! I’m having to deal with homework for the first time in a long time!” Steve is a self-described “dog fanatic” and has a special affinity

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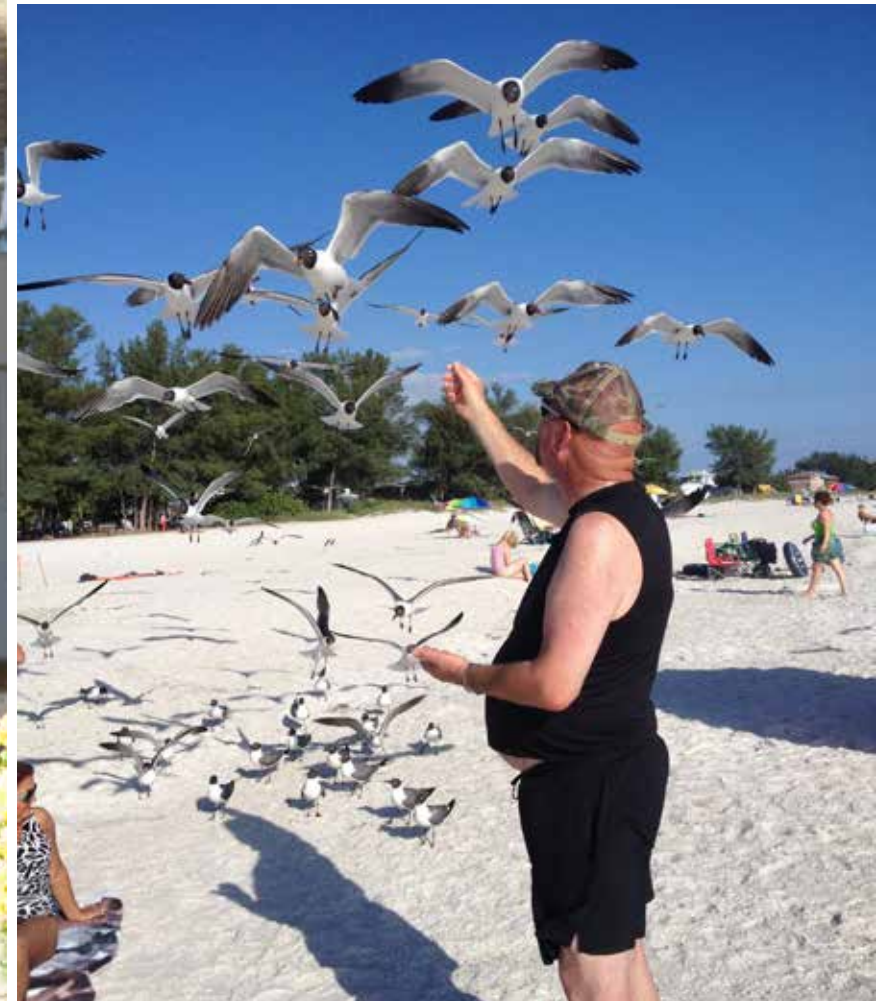
for his mutt, Pepper. "She was found in a church parking lot three years ago," he says. "Pepper has an uncanny sense of knowing when I'm coming home. She jumps up on the back of the couch when I'm close to home, and when I pull in, she runs out and meets me in the driveway."

Steve was a karate instructor for fifteen years and is a third-degree black belt. "I'd love to teach again, once we are past this Covid crisis." One thing Steve has mastered during Covid is his use of the Big Green Egg smoker. "I love to cook on it, and I've really gotten good at it!"

Settled in on Ridge Drive in the historic Woodland Hills area of Jackson, Steve says he would not want to be anywhere else. "I'm Jackson born and bred, and I love selling homes to people in the metro Jackson area."



“ I'M JACKSON BORN AND BRED, AND I LOVE SELLING HOMES TO PEOPLE IN THE METRO JACKSON AREA.



▶ rising star

Dana Marsalis

Written by Susan Marquez • Photography by Abe Draper Photography



DANCING FROM DEAL TO DEAL



From high school cheerleader to the one who cheers for her clients when they close on their home, Dana Marsalis is the kind of person you want on your side. While she is new to the real estate world, she has prepared for it directly, and indirectly, her entire life.

“I grew up in Pearl, a single child of a single mom who worked as a nurse to provide everything she could for me. My grandparents and aunts helped raise me and our family has always been really close. I even call my cousins my brothers and sisters.” Dana says she spent hours as a child thumbing through catalogs at her grandparents’ home but instead of focusing on the product she would pick out the pages with staged rooms or charming windows and imagine all the design possibilities. She loved watching shows like *Design on a Dime* on HGTV, and looking at open houses on the weekends. “I fell in love with decorating and homes when I was just eleven years old.”

Dana was involved with cheerleading and dance from age four through college. “I went to Belhaven University on a ballet scholarship.” But she quickly realized that dance was not what she really wanted to do. “I didn’t know what my purpose was. Many of my friends were at Mississippi State, so I transferred and majored in communications.” While in college, Dana was an orientation leader and she managed to snag an internship with the MSU athletic media relations department. After graduation, she returned to Belhaven as the





director of game-day operations and head cheerleading coach for ten years.

After having two children (son Jackson and daughter, Jordan), Dana needed a routine with set office hours, and eventually went to work for Mad Genius advertising agency putting her people skills to work as an account executive for seven years. “I learned so many business skills and life lessons that I will carry with me forever. Some of my best friends were made while working there.” Not only did Dana learn about advertising and marketing, but she learned to be strategic and mindful of the goals of her clients, giving her a natural edge to begin her real estate career.

The love of home design and real estate was still strong for Dana, who decided to finally pursue a personal goal. “One of my best friends, whom I deeply trust, kept telling me to only fail forward and encouraged me to

make progress every day towards my goals. The timing was right, I had that gut intuition. I figured I could do it on the side as a passion project while still working full time at Mad Genius.” She got her license in February of this year. “I wanted to show my kids that it is never too late to follow your dreams or change your path.” Dana had her first client within one week of getting her license.

Month after month, Dana has been successful in selling homes. She started her career with Katie and Stuart Warren at TurnKey Properties. “They provided me with a good foundation, for which I am forever grateful; they remain my friends and have built an amazing firm.” But when the opportunity to go full time in real estate presented itself with Leigh Jones, Dana made the decision to jump in with both feet. “Leigh believed in me and I knew I could learn a lot from her while growing stronger together by combining our skillsets. I am so thankful for the opportunity she has given me. Plus, the NextHome brand is just super



I LEARNED so many business **SKILLS** and **LIFE LESSONS** that I will **CARRY WITH ME FOREVER.**

Some of my **BEST FRIENDS** were made while working there.



cool.” Dana partners with Leigh and Lyles Signature Homes selling custom homes, giving a teamwork approach to the process.

Her passion for decorating has also led Dana to form her own company, Cozy Quarters LLC. “I focus on home decorating on a budget,” she says. “I can give your home a great look that is super budget-friendly.” From staging homes to sell for top dollar to decorating new homes, Dana loves to do it all. “I just really love everything about home design and home selling. It is truly a passion for me. Listing, showing, renovating, flipping, staging, building, negotiating, selling...I love it all! Mixing my passion for all things real estate, seeing other people smile, creating solutions, and spreading a little joy and sunshine fills my purpose that I know is God-given.”

When she isn't spending time with her children or real estate, you can find Dana teaching at The Barre off Old Fannin Road directly next door to NextHome. “It's both a mental and physical break for me. I love the clients, the team, the strength and the discipline it requires.” Other “loves” in Dana's life are sports, motivational books, good music, good food and anywhere with sunshine.

Dana lights up a room and knows she is doing what she is supposed to be doing. “I believe in fate. I know things happen according to God's plan, and I believe I'm on the path He made for me. My family has been so supportive. I gave my grandfather my business card and he showed it around to everyone! He took a picture of my yard sign with his little flip phone and he was



beaming from ear to ear. I know my mom is smiling down on me every day too. My kids think I am a rock star but they are the real rock stars. They like to feel involved and had a blast making a recent video tour of a home. I love making my family proud, I love making clients happy, but boy do I love knowing that following my dreams was achievable!”



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Written by **Susan Marquez**
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PARTEE

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With dreams of being a lawyer, Kayland “KP” Partee earned a degree in criminal justice from Jackson State University. “I grew up in south Jackson,” says KP, “near Forest Hill High School.” KP graduated from Forest Hill then went to Holmes Community College where he played basketball for two years before heading to Hattiesburg where he played basketball for Southern Miss for another two years. After sustaining an injury, he returned home to finish college at Jackson State.

...





Sometimes one incident can change the course of a person's life. For KP, that incident occurred while attending a Jackson State football game. "I was watching all the tailgating and game day activities and thought that would make for some really good photographs." He was so inspired that he took an Uber to Best Buy and bought a camera. "I didn't really know anything about cameras, so I got one I thought would be best for me at the time."

He returned to the game and snapped some photos that determined a whole new career trajectory for KP. Totally self-taught, KP has built a solid photography career. His company is Partee Photography. "I do anything photography related," he says. From still photography to videography, from portraits to corporate and promotional videos to wedding photography and videography, KP does it all. "I have spent a lot of time online, watching tutorials, and I've gotten some tips from other professionals on lighting techniques and such. But a lot of what I know is from pure trial and error."

Prior to Covid, KP was spending a lot of time in New Orleans. "I love going to New Orleans. It's my

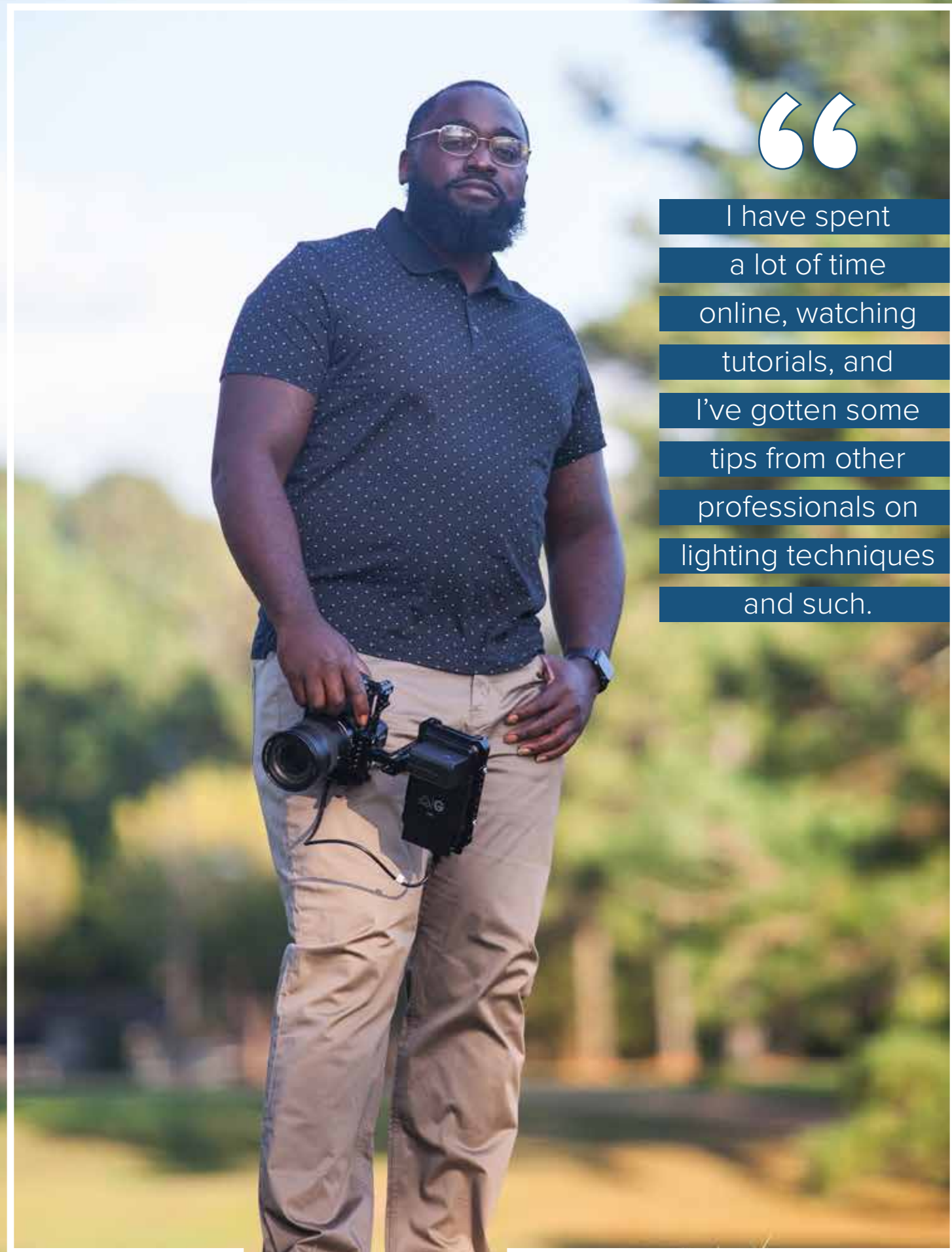
happy place, for sure! I met my girlfriend there a couple of years ago while doing some work, and that kept me going back. I kept getting more and more work there, which was great. There was a lot of wedding photography during the week - people getting married at the courthouse. I also shot a lot of conferences." Covid slowed down the work that was previously available in New Orleans, but KP says he is still plenty busy in Jackson.

"I love doing wedding videos. It is such a happy day in a couple's life. I tell them not to worry, because I will bring a team to take care of every detail. I try to get them a trailer as a kind of teaser about three to five days after the wedding and deliver the completed video within a couple of weeks of the wedding. It's fun making a mini-movie of their special day, and even more fun watching their reaction when they see it." KP says he shoots about thirty weddings a year in addition to his other photography work.

One of the things he does often is videography for real estate. "I love making a house look cool," he says. "I take video footage and edit it to make



I have spent a lot of time online, watching tutorials, and I've gotten some tips from other professionals on lighting techniques and such.






“

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a virtual house tour. It's a great marketing tool for REALTORS®." After spending so much time working with REALTORS®, KP says he has become interested in the field. "I'm thinking about possibly being a real estate agent in the future."

When he is not taking photos or making videos, KP says he enjoys spending time with family. "I have two nieces that keep me busy. I love spending time with them. I also like traveling, but Covid has kept me close to home which is fine with me. I'm a pretty simple person – I love hanging out in my back yard with family."



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▶▶ healthy living

Sweet Dreams for the Holidays

By Shauna Osborne

The holiday season is a beloved time of year for many, looking forward all year to treasured times of togetherness, food, and fun. All this festive joy, in a normal year, has been shown to lead to diminished eating, sleeping, and stress-management behaviors – and this year has been anything but normal. As we enter into December, and the throes of the bustling holiday season, it's more important than ever to practice good sleep habits to help preserve a healthy immune system and emotional wellbeing.

Pace Yourself and Adjust Expectations

This year, many are entering the holiday season already exhausted and tense; let's agree now to start by giving ourselves a break. Avoid overloading the calendar with social obligations and practice saying "no" to commitments that don't inspire joy or just feel too overwhelming. Try to plan ahead, ask for help where needed, and pace holiday activities like decorations and gift-buying and -wrapping to cut down on last-minute rushing.

Practice Good Sleep Hygiene

Strive to follow the rules of good sleep hygiene during the holidays. Avoid caffeine, large meals, and too much alcohol before bed, and don't rely on sleeping pills to get through the night. Ensure your sleep space is quiet, dark, relaxing, and at a comfortable temperature, and power down all electronics, such as computers, TV's, and smartphones, if possible, as they emit a light similar to daylight that fools our bodies into thinking they should not produce melatonin, the hormone that promotes sleep, and also present addictive distractions from snoozing.

Maintain Routines

Though it may be tempting to stay up late visiting and celebrating, aim to stay as close as possible to usual sleep schedules for naps and bedtimes, particularly for children.

Get Outside / Stay Active

While the weather outside may be frightful, it's a perfect time for enjoying outdoor activities such as taking a brisk walk or hike, skiing, or even building a snowman, depending on where you live. Inviting friends and family along means time to catch up and keep each other company while staying active. With daytime hours shorter during the winter, it's crucial to take advantage of what little light is available to keep circadian rhythms in check. Circadian rhythms react to the natural cycles of daylight and darkness and help regulate your internal clock; increasing exposure to light during the day decreases melatonin production, whereas decreased exposure to light at night increases its production, resulting in healthier sleep at night.

Productive sleep replenishes us, equipping us mentally, physically, and emotionally to contend with life's little stresses (and 2020's big stresses). This holiday season, resolve to make merry with friends and family (safely, of course!), enjoy the season to its fullest, and practice healthy sleep habits for a bright and promising 2021!



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