

**Special Interest  
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Visiting Angels serving Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Snohomish Counties

## Staying fit in old age keeps the brain sharp

A study published in the journal *Neurology* suggests that keeping physically fit in old age can also keep the brain functioning normally.

“Our study suggests that being physically active in old age could keep the brain fit,” says study author Boukje M. van Gelder.

Physical activity can improve blood flow to the brain and in so doing reduce the risk of dementia, stroke and

cognitive decline. Activity could stimulate the growth of nerve cells in the hippocampus, the region of the brain involved in memory function. This could help the brain prevent further deterioration because there is a “reserve” of nerve cells available.

The study included data on 295 men between the ages of 70 and 90. The study began in 1990, and the men were tracked for physical activity and mental agility over a 10

year period.

Researchers found:

Men who reduced their physical activity by an hour or more were 2.6 times more likely to suffer cognitive decline than men who maintained their activity levels.

Men who performed their physical activity at a lower intensity over a 10-year period were 3.6 times more likely to suffer cognitive decline than those who maintained intensity level.

### *A Letter from Fred and Debbie Bengen*



Dear Angels,

Thank you to all of you who stopped by our offices on December 15 and 16 for our Christmas open house. We enjoyed being able to visit with you!

So many of our Angels go above and beyond in their care of clients. Some of you were able to bring client's into the office to share in the open house. We heard how Angels decorated homes for the clients. We saw the kindness and tenderness of the relationships and again saw the importance of an Angel in our client's lives.

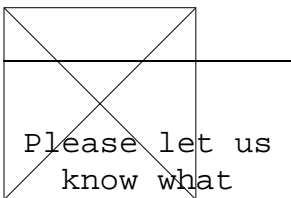
We want to acknowledge those Angels who provided care for clients

on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Working holidays is never easy and we appreciated that our client's had wonderful care.

We spent Christmas with our children and grandchildren. The three grandchildren live in Eastern Washington, so these times together are precious and never enough!

Sincerely,

Fred and Debbie



Please let us know what topics you'd like addressed in future issues!  
*Call your case manager."*

## Coping During this Holiday Season

The holidays are often seen as a joyous occasion and a chance to come together with family and friends. But for many people this time of year can be difficult. For those who are coping with anxiety and trauma at this time may find the following tips to help.

### Tips for Coping

Taking care of yourself during a stressful holiday season is one of the best things you can do for yourself and those around you.

Try to set realistic goals for the holiday. Keep expectations simple for yourself and others.

Try not to overeat or drink excessively to escape stressful feelings. Eat healthy foods and get plenty of exercise.

Remember that the holidays are more than one day; they are part of a whole season. Pace yourself. Spread

enjoyable activities throughout the entire season.

Recognize that everyone is responding to the current season differently. Allow yourself to feel sadness, anger or lonely feelings. Nurture yourself. Take some time out each day to care for and celebrate yourself.

Respect and validate other's thoughts and feelings.

Try to stay in the present. Look forward to the future. Life is full of changes. Consider what is important in your life and good about these times.

### Signs to Seek Help

If you are experiencing these symptoms over a period of several weeks, you may be depressed. Seek help.

- Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood

- Sleeping too much or too little, middle of the night or early morning waking.
- Reduced appetite and weight loss or increase appetite and weight gain
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Irritability or restlessness
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Feeling inappropriate guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness

This information from [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org). To learn more about Holiday Depression and Stress contact the National Mental Health Association 800 969 6642 or [www.Nmha.org](http://www.Nmha.org)

### Simple Things

When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things – not the great occasions – give off the greatest gift of happiness.  
*Bob Hope*

## Some lucky foods for New Year's Day

It's long been thought that what you do or say in the first moments of a new year would bring luck or reflect what you will find yourself doing for the rest of the year. Certain foods therefore have become imbued with the idea of bringing you luck if eaten

on New Year's. In some part of the United States, for instance, black-eyed peas are considered lucky if eaten on New Year's Day. Cabbage is another food that is considered lucky when eaten on New Year' Day.

The cabbage has long been a symbol for prosperity (it's leaves represent bills of paper currency). In many parts of the world it is considered to bring you luck if you consume rice on New Year's Eve.