Navigating the Holidays

Limit Your Holiday Stress

With the holidays approaching, it’s always a good time to place some focus on staying as healthy as possible. At this time of year we often find ourselves trying to keep up with shopping, decorating, cooking, kid’s school events, entertaining and family gatherings. With so much going on, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed during what is supposed to be the most festive time of year. Consider these tips:

Set limits and keep it simple. Be realistic about what you can do prior to and during the holidays. Don’t take on too much, and schedule time for breaks. Don’t feel obligated to accept every invitation or request.

Ask others for help. Sit down as a family and come up with a list of all the things that need to be done during the holidays. Brainstorm for shortcuts to getting things done, and delegate some tasks to others.

Avoid procrastinating. Putting off certain holiday tasks until the last minute will just cause more stress. Being able to scratch a few items off your list early will make you feel better.

Don’t forget to exercise. If you have a workout plan, stay with it even though you may be keeping some odd hours over the holidays. This will help keep stress in check and burn calories.

If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, don’t forget the ParTNers for Health EAP can help.

We would like to hear from you about the monthly newsletters and how the ParTNers EAP has helped you and your family.

Give Us Your Feedback!

www.Here4TN.com | 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)

During the fourth quarter of 2012, the ParTNers for Health EAP is focusing on the theme of mental wellness. Staying mentally and physically healthy can be particularly important as we approach the busy holiday season. This month we look at ways to make the best of this festive though sometimes challenging time.

Remember that if you or a family member are struggling with an issue and need some confidential help during this season, your ParTNers for Health EAP offers no-cost counseling and resources that you can access at 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486). You can also tap into the ParTNers EAP website at www.HERE4TN.com for helpful information that you can access at your own pace.
Dealing with Grief During the Holidays

After you’ve suffered the loss of a loved one, remember that there’s no right or wrong way to get through the holidays. Grieving can sometimes be a one-step-forward, two-steps-back process. Here are some tips for surviving the ups and downs of the season.

• Prepare for the fact that the holidays won’t be the same as before. You may want to hold onto some of your past traditions while starting a few new ones, if you’re ready for that.

• Don’t avoid expressing your feelings at this time. Give others the opportunity to comfort you. They will appreciate being able to help.

• Let your family and friends know what you can handle. Avoid all potentially stressful tasks and situations.

• Acknowledge your loved one’s presence in the family. Hang a stocking or light a candle in his or her honor. Put up a picture of your loved one.

• Do something for someone else. Donate time and/or money in your loved one’s name to a charity or needy family. Or invite someone over who could use some extra hospitality during the holidays. Turning your focus outward can help.

Creating New Holiday Traditions

We all know that families change over time, whether through divorce, relocation, or when family members pass away. When major changes have impacted the family, it may be time to move or reassess your old holiday traditions to see if they still work for your family in its current form. Sometimes it’s good to strike a balance between continuing with certain past traditions and starting some new ones.

If the activities you’ve always done are now creating stress or conflict in your family, you should consider changing them. Here are some tips for getting started.

Be realistic about the holidays. Your family’s holiday season doesn’t have to be perfect or just like last year. Try not to micro-manage everything.

Think about the family mix you have right now. When planning rituals or celebrations, think of ways to make them meaningful for you and your family in your current situation. Let go of activities that you no longer enjoy.

Look to the past for a few good ideas. Try to recall your warm childhood holiday memories and what made them special. Consider such holiday traditions that you could realistically refresh and pass along to your children.

Make it a group effort. Get the whole family, kids, parents, extended family members and close friends - involved in creating traditions. Ask about their favorite holiday traditions and for new ideas.

Be creative in establishing traditions. Always be on the lookout for new things you can do with your family during the holidays. Plus take advantage of today’s technologies, e.g., video chat, to bring together family members who may be far away at this time.

Try to make sure everyone’s input is considered. Work together to assemble a list of family festivities. If everyone can’t agree on whether to do a certain activity or event, then it’s probably best to leave it off the list this year.

Try to slow down at times during the holidays. Take a few minutes each day for yourself and do something relaxing. Keep your family’s eating and sleep routines as close to normal as possible to prevent children (and yourself!) from becoming cranky or overtired.
Taking the Focus off Gifts

Have the last few holiday seasons at your house been a rush of shopping for the perfect gift, worrying about your budget, wrapping and shipping presents, and making the house look perfect for the big day? And then in a few minutes it’s all over in a flurry of unwrapping madness? This common experience, which seems to miss the true meaning of the holidays, can be a real letdown.

Fortunately there are ways to get back to basics in enjoying the holidays. It’s not necessary to spend a lot on gifts to show people that you care about them. With a little planning you can have a simpler, yet much more joyful holiday – one built on tradition and family togetherness.

Here are some ideas from others on how they have put the focus on holiday experiences and activities, rather than just gift giving:

• If you put up a Christmas tree, make decorating it a traditional event. Turn on holiday music, light some scented candles, put out some cider, and set aside other activities. String the lights, hang the ornaments and enjoy being together as a family.

• Have a “holiday campout” where the family sleeps in the living room. Watch movies and snack on holiday treats.

• Take a leisurely family car trip to view holiday light displays in your area.

• Put in some family volunteer hours at the local food pantry.

• Ask the family to agree on a group outing that could build memories without being costly. Examples could be going ice skating together, visiting a big downtown holiday display, or attending a community interfaith or cultural celebration.

• On a day when everyone in your family has time off, pick a movie that all can agree on, and enjoy an afternoon matinee together.

• If you’re an animal lover, put together a special holiday arrangement of snacks for your pets. Or arrange a family holiday donation to your local animal shelter.

Avoiding Holiday Destination Tug of War

The issue of where to go and what to do during the holidays is a tricky one for many couples and families, including those impacted by divorce. Questions about who to visit this year, or whether to leave home at all, often create tension over potential hurt feelings. Below are some decision-making tips:

• Talk it out. Take some time to discuss your expectations for the holidays. Talk honestly and make choices that are realistic and best for your immediate family.

• Review what you did during past holiday seasons. What was the least stressful plan and most enjoyable for everyone? What didn’t work so well?

• Consider travel from all angles. Before traveling to visit family, assess whether or not everyone could likely handle the costs and the stress levels.

• Be realistic about what you can do. Is there enough time to visit everyone? If you have a divided family, can the children really be in two places (and eat two holiday meals) on the same day? Try to limit your destinations to one per day. Schedule other visits for another day.

Some Holiday Stress Busters

• Do your shopping at off-peak store hours, and shop online.

• Pay attention to the calories and carbs you’re consuming.

• Establish and stick to a lean budget—focus on the thoughtfulness, not the quantity, of gifts.

• Keep exercising during the holidays, including after big meals.

• Limit your alcohol intake and late hours.

• Set aside some quiet meditative time for yourself.
Fall EAP Training Opportunities

November In-Person Seminar Information

Healthier Holidays: Emotionally, Physically, and Financially (1 hour)

The holidays mean different things to different people; some see them as a time to reflect and be thankful, or to reconnect with friends and family and to relax. Others find it stress-filled, and may be worried about spending too much money or are unable to find joy due to grieving the loss of loved ones, or are so busy they overindulge in food and drink.

We will be addressing four factors: stress, relationships, finances, eating and drinking, in an effort to have healthier holidays emotionally, physically and financially. You will also have an opportunity at the end of this training to develop a plan for yourself.

All November in-person seminars are from 10 am until 11 am local time

Register here.

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Online Webinar Information

Member Webinar

Healthier Holidays: Emotionally, Physically, and Financially

December 5th 11:30 – 12:30 Central

Can’t attend the seminar? Sign up for this webinar! Note: no need to sign up for both the seminar and webinar. Both cover the same material.

Register for the Webinar here.

Other Member Webinars of Interest:

NOVEMBER
Caregiving Journey
• Stages of caregiving
• Communicating with providers
• Setting boundaries
November 14, 2012
1 – 2 p.m. Central
Register Here

DECEMBER
People Management - For Leaders
• Understand what is impacting your team’s productivity.
• Discover tips for making time work for you as a manager.
• Learn ways to improve your concentration and attention.
• Develop time management strategies to maximize your time.
December 12, 2012
1 – 2 p.m. Central
Register Here