

Solutions

Health and Wellness Information from
Family Services Employee Assistance Programs (FSEAP)

Winter 2014
Newsletter



this issue

Making the Holidays a Positive Experience

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Many of us love the Holiday Season! We are joyful and look forward to festive celebrations with family and friends. And yet for some, that image or experience is far from the truth or reality. Commercialization, loss, loneliness, lack of meaning and nostalgia can make holidays difficult for many people. Some people find the holidays stressful and cannot wait until the New Year.

The very thought of the holiday season can lead many into feeling “blue” or trigger symptoms of depression. Why? Holidays can be filled with memories of loved ones who are no longer in our lives. Divorce, death, ageing and distance are especially painful at this time. If you feel the holidays bearing down on you, planning ahead may ease the stress and may open the door for some enjoyment.

QUICK QUIZ

Take the following quiz to see if you could fall victim to the holiday blues. If you answer “yes” to the first question and “no” to the other two, you may wish to heed the following tips.

- Does the thought of holiday celebrations and customs make you feel sad instead of excited?
- Do you have a support system to help you thrive, instead of just surviving, the holidays?
- Can you create a memorable holiday for yourself instead of becoming stressed and depressed?

If you thrive on the excitement and joy of the holidays, the following ten tips may still apply to you and help you enjoy the season even more!

TEN TIPS

- **Set Realistic Expectations.**

Most holiday blues/depression is caused by unrealistic expectations. Will you be the receiver or the giver of holiday joy? Review your expectations and make them manageable; identify your most important values. Plan activities that match your expectations and are in keeping with your values, no matter what image is promoted by the media or what others’ expectations are of you.

- **Set a Budget.**

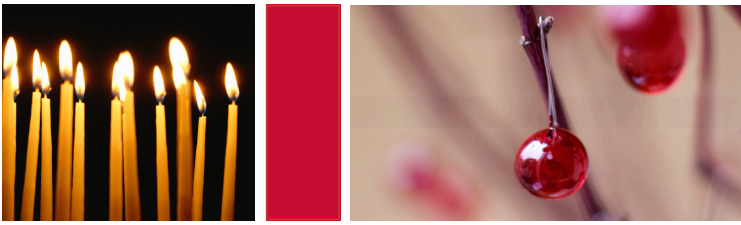
How much money will you devote to this holiday? Plan a budget that is manageable for you so that the New Year doesn’t begin with a deficit! Advance financial planning can help you feel in control, set limits, and manage your own and others’ expectations.

- **Avoid Hectic Schedules.**

Get enough rest. Sit down with family or close friends and decide what events are important to attend; manage your calendar. If you are single, balance your time and energy by scheduling some invitations to go out with having friends or family to

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talking.

From time to time we all deal with difficulty in life. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk with a trained professional – someone who is objective, caring and experienced at helping with the particular issue you are facing. Contact us to find out more about our counselling and work/life services. Call 1-800-667-0993.



your home. Suggest pot luck occasions or get together to bake, always staying within your budget.

• **Regroup and Revitalize.**

Set aside time for your favorite holiday story or movie. Create your own holiday environment, one with new traditions that will sustain, nurture and calm you. Create lots of lighting to balance the shorter days.

• **Make Plans. Get Structure!**

Check the newspaper for community songfests & events. Plan your own party. Include those who've lost spouses or whose families are far away. Plan a fun post-holiday activity to look forward to later.

• **Avoid Family Differences.**

Heal past hurts through forgiveness or "letting go." Share fun stories of family members now gone. Build an oral history to pass down with love and appreciation. If family visits prove too much to manage, give yourself permission to excuse yourself and find a less stressful time to connect with family members.

• **Help Those Less Fortunate.**

Visit a nursing home or help a less fortunate family. Volunteer at a shelter or soup kitchen. Make a list of blessings. Include challenges that may have built new strengths.

• **Cultivate Spirituality.**

Recognize and explore your spiritual beliefs during this season. Honor your customs and the beliefs behind them. Share and discuss them with family and friends. Learn about other spiritual beliefs or cultural values.

• **Avoid Excesses.**

Avoid eating or drinking too much. Practice moderation and savor holiday favorites. Stick with a healthy diet. Keep your blood sugar stable to avoid mood swings.

• **What the EAP Can Do.**

If these tips don't help you feel better about the anticipated stress brought about by the holiday season, the EAP can help. The EAP will help you tackle the holiday blues and the empty feelings that you might be facing during this time of year. You

don't have to suffer in silence or alone. Although you may see and hear the excitement of others, we know that it may not be that way for you. Together we will help you devise a personal plan to cope with the present. We'll help you capture the energy and excitement of the future as you face the coming New Year.

STARTING A CHARITABLE TRADITION

Remember the old adage, "Tis better to give than to receive?"

With the approach of the holiday season, some individuals may want to demonstrate their compassion and empathy toward others by giving to those less fortunate. Establishing charitable traditions in your family or within your workplace can be a meaningful experience and one which holds the potential for deeper satisfaction.

For those searching for charitable works, there is no shortage of causes looking for support during the holiday season. Locally, individuals can contact their Community Food Bank and ask about putting together a Christmas hamper for a less fortunate family. Alternatively, one may choose to volunteer their time to serve dinner at a local shelter for the homeless. It could also be as simple as bringing some homemade baked goods to an elderly person who is alone at Christmas. Sharing your own good fortune with others is a simple concept. And it can be fun!

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With over 20 years clinical experience Jung brings a broad range expertise to her work as an EAP Counsellor. She holds certifications in many therapeutic modalities, is a Registered Clinical Counsellor, and a Registered Marriage and Family Therapist.

How your EFAP can help

- ✓ Confidential services
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