



Employee Assistance Program Services Newsletter

WINTER 2007

Simplify

Your Holidays: Take Charge of Your Health and Your Happiness!



A plate of cookies, a crackling fire, eggnog and a tower of presents sounds both festive and inviting. In reality, this picture perfect holiday scene can come at a cost, not just financially, but mentally, emotionally, and physically. Holiday stress can cause problems that last long after the fire has died down and gifts have been opened. Here are some common problems and some helpful hints to reduce

your stress during the holidays:

I love my family, but it gets stressful when everyone is under one roof. How can I be sure to enjoy myself over the holidays?

Family and friends help to make the season bright, but they can also make the season bleak. It is easy to fall into unhealthy, old family patterns and find yourself experiencing resentment, tension and drama. To manage family get-togethers or gatherings with friends with composure and compassion, consider the following tips:

Prepare. Decide what kind of holiday you want and what is really important to you. Write down your priorities and values, then look at the holiday plans you've made: Do they reflect your values? If not, can you shift the focus? Set an intention for some things you can do to make your holiday more in line with your values. If you have difficulty with this, see an AssistNOW counselor to aid in the process.

Make it Your Own. Just because it's a family tradition does not guarantee that it has meaning to you. Create meaning for your holiday by creating traditions that feel right for you. This could take some thinking and exploring. Discuss your ideas with your family.

Keep Breathing. If you feel like the stress and obligations are too much, take a break, so you can keep your cool. The following is a scientifically proven breathing exercise that decreases anxiety and increases a sense of well being. You can do this any time, any where!

1. **Breath in** through the nose very slowly for four counts. This does not have to be a deep breath, just a normal amount of air at a slower tempo.
2. **Breath out** through the nose very slowly for four counts. Be sure to let all of the air out of your lungs very slowly.
3. **Pause for four counts.**

If breathing exercises and other methods for coping with stress are something you would like to learn more about, please contact AssistNOW to set up an appointment

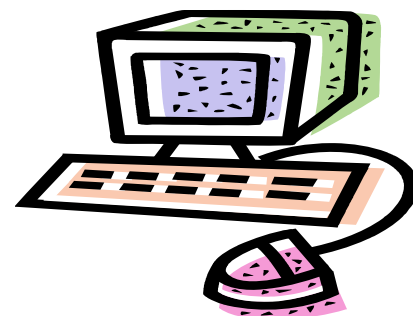
Internet Safety for your Kids

With the approaching holiday season and school vacations, children and adolescents will be spending more time than usual on the internet. Recent surveys show that many parents fear the online world -- especially the social networking sites like "my space." These parents worry that their kids will get in trouble with the people they meet. For many young people, however, the benefits of giving out some personal information to reach out to friends, outweighs the risks.

Findings suggest that parents, children and teens alike need more education about using online media. The following are tips for you to discuss with your children in the interest of promoting their safety:

- ⇒ Never give personal information to anyone you meet online or meet up with anyone you don't already know.
- ⇒ Make sure that you know everyone on your buddy list.
- ⇒ Don't answer e-mails from people you don't know.
- ⇒ There's no such thing as "private" on the internet.
- ⇒ Don't post your picture or download anything without your parents permission.

Source: www.commonsense.com



Simply your holidays—cont.

How can I prevent the gift giving of the season from driving me crazy?

The pressure to find just the right gift for loved ones can be overwhelming and all consuming. The following are some ways to honor the spirit of generosity without compromise.

1. **Reduce the Competition.** Suggest that family members give one another gifts anonymously. This eliminates the pressure and the competition, but adds a new sense of fun to the holiday!
2. **Think Outside of the Gift Box.** There are a lot of creative ways to give gifts. Here are some suggestions:
 - Donate to a charity in your loved one's name.
 - Give the gift of your talents – if you sew, clean, landscape, organize or cook (to name a few), offer these talents to your loved one to call on later in the year.
3. **Build a Consensus.** If you want to change the way your family exchanges gifts, talk about it as a group and be prepared to compromise. Don't just bring complaints to the meeting. Be sure to have solutions and ideas ready to share! The following are some ideas for suggestions that cut cost, but make for a memorable experience:
 - Draw names & buy for one person or one family.
 - Exchange board games.
 - Give out personalized "coupons" for free babysitting, snow shoveling, grocery shopping, etc.

How can I manage my weight with all of the great food?

The first place we see the cost of the holidays is in our wallet and the next is in our waistline. Last year, a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association reported that 44 percent of people experience an increase in feelings of stress during the holidays. In addition, they are much more likely to turn to unhealthy behaviors such as emotional eating and consuming excessive amounts of alcohol to manage those feelings.

Those who gain small amounts of weight over the holidays are likely to hold on to that weight, adding an average of one pound per year. Most people gain between 3 -8 pounds over the holidays.

Pinpoint The Cause of Your Holiday Gluttony. Are you eating or drinking to deal with social anxiety? Are you giving yourself a license to overdo it? Figure out what your eating and/or drinking is about and deal with that issue. Supportive counseling through AssistNOW is a great place to pinpoint the cause and find solutions!

Take a Time Out with Your Body. When you are tempted by another cookie or second helping of stuffing, pause. Expert yoga instructors suggest placing your hand on your belly and taking a deep breath. This helps to shift your focus from your thoughts into your body. Your thoughts will tell you that that frosted sugar cookie dunked in creamy eggnog sounds fabulous, but your body will tell you (if you listen) that you have had enough. This skill and many others are easy to learn with the help of a trained professional from AssistNOW. Give your EAP a call if you are interested in support with any of these or other issues. We can be reached at (216) 431-4140 or (800) 840-4654.

Source: Johni Fiber, Therapist, 2007



JOHNI FIBER

Johni Fiber is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor. She received her BA in psychology from the University of Akron and her Master of Education in Community Counseling from Kent State University. Ms. Fiber has been a therapist with Recovery Resources for 3½ years and happily joined the EAP division in October of this year. She has worked in a variety of clinical settings, providing drug and alcohol counseling, mental health counseling, family therapy, couples therapy and child/adolescent therapy. She has over nine years of experience providing supportive services for survivors of trauma. Her clinical interests and expertise are in the treatment of trauma issues, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and stress disorders, sexuality and sexual orientation issues, and grief issues.

Ms. Fiber is creative, empathic, and fully believes in the power of counseling. She employs a variety of therapeutic techniques and modalities, aiding each person in meeting his or her goals and potential. In her free time, Johni enjoys making jewelry, decorating, hiking, reading, and cooking.

Remember,
for confidential assistance call:

AssistNOW

The EAP Division of
Recovery Resources

216.431.4140

1.800.840.4654