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How to Enjoy a Stress-Free Holiday



The holidays can be a very stressful time, and can sometimes feel like it is too much to handle. Dealing with stress and stressful situations can be overwhelming to some people, so in this newsletter we hope to help you gain knowledge not only about the causes and symptoms of stress, but also how to help deal with this stress in a productive and meaningful manner.

Take control of the Holidays! Instead of them controlling You!

Knowing what exactly causes Holiday stress is a very important start in trying to have a stress-free holiday.

Holiday stress may include:

- Time of assessing our lives
- Fear of disappointing others
- Expecting gifts to improve relationships
- Bad/Good memories
- Anniversary reactions
- Unrealistic expectations
- Magical thinking
- Emotional amplification
- Seasonal Affective Disorder(SAD)

A recent poll survey done by Web M.D. says that people feel the main causes of holiday stress include: financial worries (34%), loneliness (29%), family gatherings (21%) and high expectations (16%).

One important factor that plays into reducing stress is the role of control. Less perceived control will often times equal more stress. It is important to tell yourself that you do have things under control, and to make sure to not take too many things on that you know realistically cannot be accomplished. When

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there is more perceived control most people will find they are less stressed.

It is important to note the symptoms of stress so that you, or someone you know, may realize that they may be under stress. Some of the symptoms that accompany stress include:

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Increased health problems
- Martial conflict
- Social withdrawal
- Inability to enjoy yourself

Stress is linked to 6 leading causes of death in the United States. Each year Americans spend billions to fight symptoms of stress. Most doctors visits (75-90%) are stress related. These statistics can be startling to some people, but should be used as a warning for others to help deal with stress when it first arises, rather than later.

Holiday Stress Buster



Busting holiday stress is very important. Having set goals and realizations will help you get through this stressful time. First, be realistic with your expectations. Trying to make your house look like Martha Stewarts' may not be possible. Second, drink less alcohol and eat less. Doing this will help you to feel not only healthier, but also will help you to have more energy. Next, have a spending limit and stick to it! Most of us all make budgets for ourselves, but sticking to them is most important. You don't want to cause yourself more stress in the new year with less money and more bills. Other holiday stress busters include: be honest with yourself and others as to what you can accomplish, have a time management plan, define how you want your holiday to be, reframe loss and sadness, exercise, and be thankful!

Holiday Money Management

Managing your money is a very important part to decreasing holiday stress. One way to help manage your money is by having a pre-set amount to spend, and making yourself stick to this amount! Another helpful idea is to write out a task/time schedule and stick to it. Avoid any last minute purchases, as well as

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guilt purchases. While these gifts may seem nice at the time, you may regret your decision soon after. Make sure to keep the receipts for all purchases, and take back the gifts you do not want. Finally, remind yourself what it will be like in February when you are making credit card payments.



Making sure that you deal with your holiday stress is very important. It's important to make sure that you relax during this time, and take a break for yourself. If you find yourself feeling sad or in a depressed mood for 2 or more weeks, it is important to seek help as soon as possible. If you also notice changes in appetite or sleep, increased irritability, less interest in daily activities, or problems in concentration or focus, getting help is extremely imperative. Holiday stress can be overcome; it is just a matter of taking time to realize how!

Please contact your Advantage EAP with any further questions at:

(540) 989-6605 or 800-699-9396

Or visit our website at www.psychhealthroanoke.com

Some helpful online resources:

- <http://www.studygs.net/stress.htm>
- <http://stress.about.com/od/fearandstres1/a/anxiety.htm>
- <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/mentalhealth/stress/167.html>