



YourEAP

Your Employee Newsletter

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Happy Holidays Despite Hard Times

It's no secret that this holiday season will be a challenging time in light of current economic conditions nationwide. Our usual rituals of buying and spending are being tempered by very real financial concerns. But a few adjustments and new perceptions might be all we need to guarantee a memorable holiday season. Here are a few ideas:

Consider doing a potluck. For the traditional Thanksgiving gathering allow everyone to bring a dish versus one person taking on the load for the entire dinner. The family will be able to enjoy one another instead of being tired from spending countless hours cooking and making preparations for the big dinner.

Consider giving gift cards this year. Rather than guessing what our friends *might want*, a gift card allows the recipient to select what he or she really needs. And because gift cards come in specific denominations, it becomes easier for us to control spending.

Try something creative. Going out to buy presents has always been a hit or miss proposition. And judging from the furious exchange activity that predictably occurs between Christmas and New Year, there are more misses than hits. So why not create a gift that targets the recipient's interests? Possibilities include assembling gift baskets that focus on themes ranging from sports to auto detailing supplies. For someone with a long commute to work, a welcome gift basket could include books on CD, a pair of driving gloves or perhaps an ice scraper! The planning that goes into such a present will be meaningful and appreciated far beyond its actual dollar value.

Make a movie. These work best for special friends or distant relatives and can include personal messages, shares memories, family updates or humorous skits. A DVD that arrives in a holiday card will trigger immediate interest and will most likely have more impact than a necktie or bottle of perfume.

Focus on the forgotten. The holidays are lonely times for many. Contact a local nursing home, reach out to a neighbor who is alone and ask if you might help serve the holiday dinner, decorate or simply visit with those who might otherwise spend the holidays alone. Spreading happiness can be personally fulfilling, especially during this special time of year.

Remember that your EAP is always just a phone call away. The holidays can accentuate feelings of personal loneliness, separation and isolation. These are normal feelings at a time of the year that emphasizes family get-togethers. So if you find yourself feeling bad, sad or alone during the holidays, don't hesitate to call Your Employee Assistance Program.

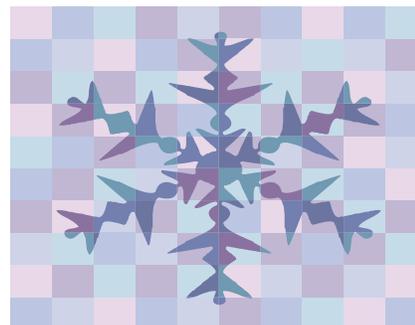
How to Stay Mentally Healthy During the Holidays

The holiday season is upon us. Holidays can be joyous and stressful, and especially challenging for those impacted with mental illness. A NAMI study showed that 64% of people with mental illness report the holiday season makes their condition worse. For many, the holiday season is not always the most wonderful time of the year. For individuals and families coping with mental health challenges, the holiday season can be a lonely and/or stressful time, filled with anxiety and/or depression. For those living with a mental health condition, stress can worsen the symptoms. The COVID-19 crisis has made maintaining mental health more challenging for many.

Here are some suggestions on how to reduce stress and maintain good mental health during the holiday season:

- **Take steps to stay safe.** Stay true to COVID guidelines and be extra careful when shopping during the holiday season.
- **Take care of your needs.** Be kind to yourself! Take time out to do some of the things that bring you pleasure.
- **Write a gratitude list and offer thanks.** As we near the end of the year, it's a good time to reflect back on what you are grateful for, then thank those that have been a support to you. Gratitude has been shown to improve mental health.
- **Manage your time and don't overdo it.** Prioritize Prioritize.
- **Set healthy boundaries.** Family dynamics can be complex. Know what's within your control and what's not.
- **Practice relaxation.** Deep breathing, meditation and progressive muscle relaxation are good ways to calm yourself.
- **Exercise daily.** Schedule time to walk outside, jog, bike ride or join a yoga class. Whatever you do, make sure its fun.
- **Set aside time for yourself and practice self-care.**
- **Eat well and get enough rest.**
- Last but not least, **BE REALISTIC!**

Any questions? YourEAP can help. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.



The Greatest Gift of All

Forgiveness is the greatest gift you can give to others and yourself. Forgiveness is not condoning or forgetting about wrong behavior and it doesn't guarantee that pain will go away. It is letting go of negative and toxic feelings that keep us stuck, filled with anger, vengeful, bitter and resentful. Forgiveness is not a one and done thing, it is a process. Like a muscle we have to exercise it to strengthen it. Here are some tips to start:

Make it a value in your life. Hold forgiveness as a goal and work up to it in incremental stages.

Start with the small things. Let go of small slights and assume the best of others. Practice a small forgiveness every day and work up to the big things.

Forgive yourself. When we honestly face our own weaknesses and imperfections, it can help us develop tolerance for others.

Just do it. The holidays and the New Year give you a good excuse to reach out. Make the call, send the email, and extend the hand.

Get help. YourEAP is here to navigate the difficult times in your life. Reach out!

Reminder **Important Time Limited PSLF Opportunity**

Remember to check www.pslf.gov/
www.studentaid.gov/ to see if you meet the requirements for the student loan forgiveness. The deadline is October 31, 2022