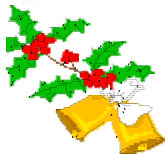


Solutions

FAMILY SERVICES EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER



SURVIVING AND ENJOYING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The Holidays are coming... so is the pressure of having the perfect Holidays.

Most families aren't calm and cheery over the Yuletide. Most families don't have money to finance that Norman Rockwell Christmas. With a little planning, you and your family can have enjoyable Holidays without the grief and stress, and without going broke. Remember if your expectations are realistic then, the Holidays can be a fun and cherished time of year.

Call a family conference. Go over family traditions. Do a traditional overhaul if need be. Also take a look at everyone's individual stressors. Is there special baking, last minute shopping, too many parties or events, organizing things, clean-up? See if you can buy goodies from a Christmas bazaar, do some catalogue shopping or throw a potluck party. Look at easier ways of getting things done.

How to Avoid Holiday Stress

Make a "Things To Do To Have a Happy Holiday Season" list. What has to be done, what would be nice and what the family can live without. Narrow the list down and delegate tasks to all family members. Kids usually like to wrap presents, address Seasons' Greeting cards and

decorate the house. This family task time brings togetherness and warmth for a Happy Holiday Time.

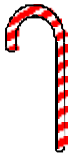
Tips for your Holiday Season budget

Definitely make a budget and stick to it. Avoid the February Bill Blues. Try this:

- making cash-only purchases,
- starting a family gift exchange,
- giving "free" presents like an afternoon of babysitting, housecleaning, etc.,
- buying for the individual not the price tag,
- telling young children that Santa only leaves one or two presents because he has so many to deliver. For older children, give them a price range for presents.

Another Holiday frenzy is friends/relatives who don't get along. You are not responsible for everyone's happiness. People who don't get along the rest of the year probably won't get along during the Holidays. It puts extra stress on everyone to "be nice". The Holidays doesn't solve family problems.

This season give yourself a break – right into the New Year – forget about the perfect Holidays and cherish the pleasures you find right now!



HOLIDAY SEASON CRAZINESS! STOP THE INSANITY! TIPS & IDEAS

Put an “X” beside the things you do and a “*” beside the things you’d like to try.

		Have a tree decorating party and have everyone make an ornament with inexpensive material you supply: popcorn or cranberries, paint or colour plain Christmas balls.	Treat yourself to a Holiday Season concert or ballet over the Holidays.
		Play games on Christmas day – adults too – games like Pictionary, Scattogories, Scrabble, Gestures.	Give gifts in the form of experience and time. Take your grandmother or best friend to a Holiday Season concert or ballet.
		Be active, plan to skate or build a snowman during long days of inactivity.	Plan a Holiday Season baking party. Everyone bakes lots of one type of cookie, then you swap. It’s less work and everyone gets lots of different baking.
		Go carolling around your neighbourhood or plan to visit a Senior’s Home.	Talk to your children about the advertising they see on television. Help them see the techniques used to make different children want the toys. Make a game of it and soon they’ll see advertisements from a different perspective.
		Plan quiet time – “fireside chats” – just to sit and talk quietly with your immediate family.	This Holiday Season choose to write in a journal. Commit to 15 minutes every day. It will help you relax and get clearer about what is meaningful and satisfying about the holidays and it will give you good information for next year.
		Volunteer at a soup kitchen or spend time over the holidays helping the needy and homeless.	Invite someone who will be alone this year to spend Christmas day with your family.
		Put a new spin on the word gift exchange. Instead of putting a price limit on gifts, wrap something you already own. Pile them up and have everyone choose a number. The person with the lowest number chooses any first gift. The next person can “steal” the first person’s gift or choose another. This continues until everyone has a gift.	If you are feeling blue and unhappy, find something to do for someone else. The best way to remove your own sorrows is by relieving someone else’s. Teach your children to do this. (Offer to chauffeur the disabled, look after someone’s kids, wrap and deliver presents.)
		Go together with some friends and joint sponsor or adopt a needy family. The thank you card you receive in January will warm your heart again.	Turn down invitations that overtax you or create a schedule that is too harried.
		Build the habit of asking yourself “Is this really important?”, when you’re stressing out. Develop the attitude of gratitude.	Don’t write Christmas cards this year.
		Do something spontaneous and wacky over the holidays, - dress up in festive garb, as Santa or an elf or an angel and spend the day making people smile.	Have your spouse write Christmas cards this year.
		Be honest in your family letter that you photocopy and mail to all your friends. Instead of the perfect family letter, poke fun at yourself and write it with humour and lightness.	If someone in your family has passed away this year, start a ritual to honour their memory. Light a special candle, say a prayer, sing a song or tell their favourite stories.
		Reduce gift giving by drawing names or only giving to the young children of immediate families.	Start a big puzzle and leave it out as a “work in progress”.
		Read to your family. Start a new ritual of reading one story a day from the Chicken Soup books or Robert Fulgham books, or Christmas Story books.	Attend a candlelight church service.
		Start a ritual using angel cards and talk about values. Use the words to start a discussion about how the family acts on these values and where you may fall short.	Make it a habit to walk through parks with lots of Holiday Season’s lights.
			Other:

**Family Services offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For more information on your EAP call:
1-800-668-9920**