



THE EAP CONNECTION

DOWNSIZING HOLIDAY STRESS

'Tis the season for preparing an abundance of delicious foods, cleaning the house from top to bottom, shopping for a mountain of gifts, coordinating the perfect clothes for the family to wear, decorating the house just right, traveling to relatives near and far, and... If just reading this list is causing you a little, or maybe more than a little, dread, you're not alone. And for many of us, this is only a fraction of the items on our holiday to-do list. With all these things, we can become a stressed-out scrooge mighty quickly. By the time we get to the festivities, we're worn out, and maybe even wishing for the holiday season to just be over already. If this sounds like you, it might be time to change your approach. Here's some things you can do to make the holiday season more manageable:

Don't wait until the last minute.

Nothing is worse for stress than waiting until the last minute to get everything accomplished. Plan ahead and give yourself enough time to check the items off your list. You may even find that you enjoy things more when you aren't rushing around.

Let go of the little things.

No one will likely remember the minute details of your holiday party, house decorations, or dinner menu. Release yourself from unnecessary stress caused by trying to make everything grand and perfect, right down to the polished silver and pristine glassware. Spend your time focused on the most important holiday tasks, and let the rest go.

Keep your expectations realistic.

Especially during the holiday season, we each only have so much time and resources available. While it can be difficult to pick and choose what activities you will do and how you will spend your money, it's important to set boundaries for yourself. Overcommitting your time or spending more than you have can make the holiday season quite stressful.

Do the things that bring you joy.

While some may tell you that you need to prepare certain foods or do certain activities to celebrate a holiday right, the truth is that you need to do the things that make you happy. Creating a Hallmark-worthy holiday because it's what you *should* do, may leave you feeling frustrated, irritable, and unhappy as you try to live up to an unrealistic ideal. Give yourself permission to create the holiday of your dreams, even if it doesn't fit with others' ideas of the holiday.

Focus on the connections.

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of a materialistic holiday season that you forget to enjoy the connections with those around you. One of the greatest things about the holiday season can be the way it brings people together. It's families and friends sharing a holiday meal, communities partaking in festivals, colleagues socializing at a party, volunteers working for a cause, or people joining in religious and spiritual gatherings. Investing your energy and time in connecting with people in meaningful ways can help ensure you enjoy the season. And if you are feeling stress about being alone this holiday, it's an excellent time to reach out to those around you and make a connection.

Live in the moment.

With things constantly changing in our lives, the holidays can be a great reminder to slow down and practice mindful living. Instead of flying through the motions of the season, take some time to really experience the sights, sounds, and sensations.

Changing your mindset about the holidays can make a big impact on reducing stress and spending more time on the things that bring you joy and happiness.

HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website ERCincorp.com or call 1-800-222-8590.