



Happy Holidays

Thanksgiving and the winter holidays are sometimes called the “anxiety season.” Too often, stress and bouts of depression accompany our holiday celebrations. Recognizing and managing these problems, can enhance our enjoyment of the holiday season.

Family Gatherings

When there is unresolved conflict in the family, stress may arrive along with relatives for holiday visits. Fear of re-igniting old feuds can cause unnecessary tension during the holidays. Having happy family visits requires planning and a *willingness to change worn-out patterns* that may be stressful. *There are no perfect relatives so prepare for going home or having holiday visitors by:*

- ☒ **Talking out your expectations** for the visit in advance with your spouse or close friend.
- ☒ **Accepting differences** between yourself and family members; relationships are more important than making a particular point.
- ☒ Keeping a **sense of humor** so you can laugh at the little things.
- ☒ Having **mutual respect** for the differences in values and needs of the different generations in the family.

You and your loved ones can provide each other with more than good food and fun times during the holidays: *you can help one another become healthier and live longer.* Recent research shows that **people who have close ties to friends and family are physically and psychologically healthier than loners.** The simple presence of human touch of another person has been proven to be calming, lowering blood pressure and heart rate, helping extend live.

Gift Giving

Exchanging presents is supposed to be fun, but too often, it makes us feel **anxious** and **insecure**. The gifts we give make statements about our relationships; they're **a form of communication**. Gifts can say not only “*I love you*,” “*I wish you happiness*,” but “*I’m sorry I’ve neglected you*,” “*Let’s pretend everything’s okay*,” or “*See how successful I am*.”

Different people have **different gift giving styles**; giving cash is less personal than giving a gift that reflects intimate knowledge of the recipient’s interests and tastes. *Really listen* to what your loved ones say and observe what they enjoy. The gifts you give as a result won’t be any more costly, but will probably be a lot more meaningful; they’ll say, “*I care enough to learn who you are and what you like*.”

Examine your motives before you go shopping. Don’t overspend trying to create an idealized vision of what you think the winter holidays should be and then wake up in January stressed-out by the debt. Remind yourself that some of **the most valuable gifts are those you can’t buy**. *Share your time and friendship with people you love.*

- ✓ **Give a “private time” coupon** to your child, good for a day in which you’ll do whatever he/she wants.
- ✓ **Put together a photo album** of your family for a relative living far away. Ask family members to write personal captions and memories.
- ✓ **Share your talents.** Set aside time to teach a friend how to bake bread, knit, paint, or whatever you do best.
- ✓ **Express your love.** Give your family the caring words we all love to hear but too seldom say.

If you or a loved one are experiencing difficulty coping with the stress of the winter holidays, call Employee Support Systems Company, your EAP, for more individualized support. They are available free of charge, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week and are completely confidential.

1-800-221-0945