



December 2017

## STRESS AND THE HOLIDAYS - TIS THE SEASON

The holidays...a time of parties, shopping, entertaining, spiritual observances, family gatherings, decorating and...stress! With all the extra demands we place on ourselves and the expectations of the season, is it any wonder that most of us feel some stress at this time of year? Holiday stress is really quite simple: when it comes to time, money, social and family commitments, many of us try to do too much with too little and too often.

**Setting Holiday Priorities** - It is common for many of us to overextend ourselves during the holidays. When we allot our limited time, we need to consider quality over quantity. Decide which activities you and your family would most enjoy doing and focus on those. By taking time to identify and collaborate regarding your values and priorities, a plan can be formed that will ensure your choices at this time of year are particularly meaningful. Learn to say “no” gently and firmly to social events and requests that are over your limit. Saying “yes” to one thing, often means saying “no” to something else.

**Plan the Holiday Work, Work the Holiday Plan** - Nothing creates more holiday stress than last minute shopping and preparations. Take charge of your holidays in advance by making lists of things to do and setting aside time each day for them. Involve others in your plan...ask for help from other family members. A holiday feast doesn't have to be elaborate to be wonderful.

**Dollars and Sense--Staying on Budget** - Do holiday preparations strain your budget? This year why not find a way to simplify buying decisions and stay within a realistic budget for you and/or your family? Choose simple, or thoughtful gifts over elaborate, expensive surprises. How can you enjoy the holidays if you are worried about paying your bills? An expensive December can result in a financially demanding January!

**The Emotional Roller Coaster Ups and Downs** - The holidays can be challenging to our emotional well-being. The holidays of childhood may take on a magical glow that's often impossible to recover in adulthood. For some of us, the memories of holidays past are unpleasant and unhappy. Or, this may be the first holiday season for some of us after the death of a loved one.

We may be dreading the family gathering that seems to always lead to someone not speaking to someone else. If family gatherings are stressful, avoid long visits either in your home or away. Defer settling family arguments until some other time. Focus your energy this holiday season on being with people who care about you, who are positive and encouraging. Consider being that kind of person in someone else's life.

**The Gift of Self-Care for the Holidays** - Counter the holiday pressures by giving yourself some time for daily rest and renewal. Take time to reflect on what the holiday season is celebrating for you and try to stay in tune with that spirit. Peace and joy can be more than just a department store come-on. Care for “self” can give us what we need to care for others. Here are a few self-care ideas:

- ❖ Take time to be with those you care about and who care for you.
- ❖ Enjoy quiet moments wherever you feel at peace...in nature, alone, in fellowship with others or in a place of worship.
- ❖ Consider meaningful charities and other organizations that might benefit from your gift of time or money.
- ❖ Exercise when you can, stay rested and get enough sleep.
- ❖ Avoid overindulgence in holiday food, alcohol and caffeine.

Take steps to make this holiday truly a time of meaning, peace and joy for you. If you find the stress of this season getting the best of you, you may wish to contact an Island EFAP counsellor. We are grateful to all of you for your ongoing support of our programs and services over the past year. We wish you and your families a joyous and peaceful holiday season and a happy and healthy 2017!

