Holiday Stress

For many the first signs of holiday stress emerge around Halloween, when stores begin stocking shelves with Christmas decorations and candies. People begin to feel the clock ticking and that there is not enough time to fit everything in. We often have higher expectations for this time of year than any other, which places even more pressure on us and increases the likelihood we may be disappointed.
Holidays
Reason for the Season

What does it mean to you?

What are you celebrating?

What values do you think of when you think of your holiday? Are you practicing them?

Consider past holidays. Where did you invest your energy? Was it worth it?

As a family, consider the traditions and rituals that you practice. Which ones do you enjoy?
Holiday Stress
By the Numbers

American Psychological Association Survey

- Lack of money: 61%
- Pressure of gift giving: 42%
- Lack of time: 34%
- Credit Card Debt: 23%
- Affect on physical health: 36%

Eating: 22%  Alcohol: 14%

People turn to what they know
Holiday Stress Reactions

• We often respond to stress with unhealthy habits such as smoking, overeating, and overdrinking
• Feelings of distress, tension, anxiety and harassment
• Physical response to stress with high blood pressure, tension headaches, upset stomach
Holiday Injuries

• **Holiday decorating can be hazardous to your health!**
  
  – CDC analysis of 17,465 emergency rooms visits for decorating falls during holiday months
  – Using ladders was the most common risk factor for fall injuries
  – Majority injuries (62%) to persons aged 20-49
  – Males sustained more injuries than females
    • 58% to 42% respectively
Holiday Injury Types

- Falls from ladders, roofs with the type of injury-fractures to the extremities
  - Nearly half hospitalized
- Tripping over holiday decorations
- Other injuries: contusions, lacerations, sprains and abrasions
Holiday Stress

Survey Says…
**Holiday Expectations**

- Are your expectations realistic?
- Make a list of what you and your family expect from this holiday season
  - Hidden within these expectations are most likely your stressors
  - Adopt changes that will be helpful to you
  - Write down changes that will help defuse stress
- Avoid holding on to unrealistic expectations
The Perfect Gift

• Ask friends and family what they want instead of scouring the earth for the perfect gift

• Shop early for more selection or on-line

• Stick to your gift budget

“People need to realize that their presence in good cheer is much more important than the present given”

-Edwin B. Fisher, PhD Division of Behavior Health Research
Washington University
Family Get-Togethers

• Buy prepared foods instead of cooking everything from scratch
• Ask others to bring a favorite dish
• Cook and freeze ahead of time
• Don’t spend all your time planning family activities

  – Take time to finish the task; don’t try to do everything at once

  – Ask others to help with the chores

  – That includes cleaning the kitchen after the big meal...
Managing Time

_set priorities and let go of impossible goals_
- Take a serious look at your calendar November through January 1st
- Be realistic about how much you can do

_stop to enjoy the fruits of your labor_
- If you don’t, you just might feel drained and unappreciated

_rest when your body tells you to_
- Fatigue and tension can affect your mood and ability to get things done
- Try to keep your regular sleeping pattern
Holiday Blues

For some, the holidays can be depressing due to feelings of loss, sadness and loneliness. Anger can sometimes intensify when contrasted with the expectation of the holidays.

• Spend time with people who care about you
• Volunteer at the local homeless shelter
• Stay active
• Accept the feelings; don’t be afraid to ask for help
• Reflection is good for the soul
Holiday Stress

“I remove stress by removing “should” from the holidays. Each year, I decide what feels most appropriate to me, given the time and the energy I have available: time with family, time alone, casual parties or an elaborate dinner. That way, each year’s celebration is an expression of my true holiday spirit, not simply an obligation to get through.”

RealSimple.com
Coping Skills
Handout
Kids Feel Stress Too!

• Kids can feel lost in the shuffle
  – Often take emotional cues from parents and caregivers
  – Assign tasks that are suitable to each personality
  – Becomes a tradition for the child and a sense of purpose

• Kids crave structure
  – Keep them posted on the plans
  – Try not to over schedule
  – Let them run the excess energy off
  – Give an SOS plan; secret gesture or code word