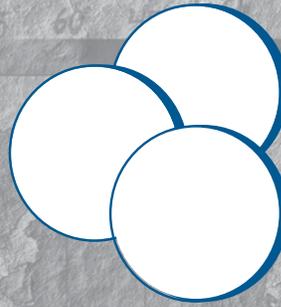


FALL

Fall 2014



Key Solutions
Employee Assistance Program



Coping With Holiday Stress

The holiday season can be a time of joy, but it can also be hectic and stressful. Most children wait eagerly for the holidays to arrive. Adults often have more mixed feelings. For them, the holidays mean increased stress: dashing to decorate the house, elbowing through crowds at the mall and fretting about the right gift or how to pay for it.

Relax! Don't let stress suck the joy out of your holiday season. These ten tips can help you keep stress under control so your holidays can be merry and bright.

Tip #1: Create a game plan.

Spend a little time up front getting organized. Make a list of what you need to buy. Try to shop ahead of time, before things are picked over and you're under pressure. If you'll be cooking, plan your menu. Think about whether some items could be prepared ahead and frozen or refrigerated. Fatigue, over scheduling and taking on too many tasks can

dampen your spirits. Learn to say no, delegate as much as possible and manage your time wisely. If you choose to do less you will have more energy to enjoy the most important part of the season — friends and family!

Tip #2: Make a budget and stick to it.

Money is one of the major stressors during the holidays. Don't dig yourself into a hole by overspending. A thoughtful gift doesn't have to be expensive. If money is tight, suggest a family gift exchange with a spending limit. Remember, it's not about the presents, it's about the presence.

Tip #3: Accept reality.

Guests may arrive late. Your mother may get on your nerves. The turkey may be dry. Real life isn't a holiday special. Don't expect perfect decorations, a perfect meal or perfect people. Try to go with the flow and enjoy what you have.

Tip #4: Beware of unhealthy stress relievers.

Holiday stress causes some people to fall into bad habits such as smoking, drinking or eating too much. Think about any unhealthy habits you're prone to and come up with better ways to handle stress.

Tip #5: Create new traditions.

Stressed out by the usual festivities? Try something different. Instead of cooking a huge meal on your own, make it a potluck. Ask adults to bring gag gifts, have a "white elephant" or a used-book gift exchange. Attend a local holiday concert, walk the neighborhood to look at holiday lights or go sledding.

Tip #6: Make time for your health.

In the holiday rush, don't let your well-being fall by the wayside. Try to stay on your normal sleep schedule and get regular exercise. If you can't find a 30-minute chunk of time for exercise, break it up into three 10-minute sessions spread throughout the day.

Tip #7: Watch out for caffeine and alcohol.

Caffeine can raise your stress and interfere with sleep. Alcoholic drinks contain lots of calories and drinking too much may make you feel depressed. Instead, drink plenty of water or try herb tea or seltzer.

Tip #8: Give yourself a break.

In the midst of doing things for others, it's easy to forget to take care of ourselves. If you feel stress building up, get away for a few minutes. Find a quiet corner and do some deep breathing, listen to calming music or just sit. Or throw on a coat and slip outside for a walk.

Tip #9: Enjoy!

The holidays are supposed to be time of joy and togetherness. In the flurry of the holidays, we sometimes forget what we're celebrating. Remember to savor the time with the people you love

Tip #10: Learn forgiveness and acceptance.

If some of your relatives have always acted out or made you feel bad, chances are that won't change. If you know what you're getting into, it will be easier to not let them push your buttons. If things get uncomfortable, go to a movie or for a drive and adjust your attitude.

May the holidays bring you all the love and joy they can, and may the true meaning of the season touch your heart.

Source: "Coping with Holiday Stress", OptumHealth, 2011

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Healthy Recipe: Protein Power Balls



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup sweetened coconut (toasted)
- 1 cup cornflakes
- 3/4 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup soy protein powder
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine peanut butter, cornflakes, protein powder, brown sugar and chocolate chips into mixing bowl. Work mixture together with hands to combine ingredients.
- Use spoon to scoop out mixture and roll into golf-ball sized balls. Roll in toasted coconut to coat the outside.
- Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Store in an upright container in refrigerator for up to 1 week.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories Per Serving: 133
- Carbohydrates: 11 g.
- Protein: 9 g.
- Fat: 8 g.
- Fiber: 1 g.

5 Tips to Manage Emotional Eating

By Elisabeth Davies, MC

Have you ever eaten when you are not necessarily hungry?

Many of us consider our favorite foods to be a reward. When we eat delicious foods our brain releases Dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps us control the amount of reward and pleasure we experience. Dopamine also helps regulate emotional responses. Eating food can temporarily make us feel better and offer us a distraction from stress, boredom, anxiety, anger, guilt, disappointment and disturbing thoughts. There are even certain foods, such as seafood, oranges, grapefruits and hot chillies, which can raise our endorphin levels, temporarily elevating our mood.

There is nothing wrong with eating when we are not hungry or even eating past our "full point" every now and then... until the costs of eating begin to outweigh the benefits. When we become obese (more than 30 pounds overweight) from emotional eating, there are increased health risks, including diabetes and heart disease. There is a financial impact when we have to buy new clothes and an erosion of self-esteem due to body image concerns.

Listed below are 5 tips to help you manage emotions and avoid weight gain or any negative costs:

Tip #1: When you start to put food in your mouth, STOP for one second and ask yourself, "Am I hungry?"

If the answer is "No", then ask, "Well, what do I need then?" If you are not hungry, you don't need food. Find a positive way to meet your need rather than using food to distract from it.

Tip #2: As you bring food to your mouth, STOP and take a moment and look at it.

How does it look? What color is it? How does it smell? How does it taste? How does it feel? What sound do you hear when you are eating? Using your senses to become present when you are eating allows you to practice conscious eating rather than eating unconsciously. There are two benefits to using your senses to become present:

1. Being present decreases anxiety and brings you back to an emotional balance.
2. Being present by using your senses allows you to be aware of how much you are eating and when you are full.

Tip #3: When you are craving sweets, or your favorite foods, and you are not hungry, say to yourself, "In two minutes I will decide."

During those two minutes do something that effectively calms emotions, like make a journal entry, read a self-help article, go for a walk or listen to soothing music. Strong cravings last anywhere from 30 seconds to two minutes. Each time you override a craving by not giving in to it, you lessen the frequency of the unwanted habit!

Tip #4: Decrease emotional upset and increase emotional wellbeing.

Focus on thoughts that enhance your mood. Look for the good in things throughout your day. Say positive, affirming statements about your worth and value as a person. Create a gratitude list. Positive thoughts create positive emotions.

Tip #5: Purchase dry-erase markers and write on your bathroom mirror.

Write motivational phrases such as, "NO criticism allowed!" or "My body has value, regardless of its shape or size." Each morning when you get up to comb your hair or brush your teeth, read the mirror messages. When you love your body, you will treat it with value, including what foods you put into it.

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