

The EAP
is a **free** service
for you and your
eligible family members.

All EAP services are
**completely
confidential.**

FEATURES

Page One

Holiday Depression and Stress

Page Two

Get Your Thoughts Together
Positive Communication
Communication Tips for Home and
Work

Page Three

Communication Tips for Home and
Work

Page Four

Heading off Holiday Havoc
How to Use Your EAP

Holiday Depression and Stress

The holiday season is a time full of joy, cheer, parties, and family gatherings. However, for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future.

What Causes Holiday Blues?

Many factors can cause the “holiday blues”: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial constraints, and the inability to be with one’s family and friends. The demands of shopping, parties, family reunions, and house guests also contribute to feelings of tension. People who do not become depressed may develop other stress responses, such as: headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating, and difficulty sleeping. Even more people experience post-holiday let down after January 1. This can result from disappointments during the preceding months compounded with the excess fatigue and stress.

Coping with Stress and Depression During the Holidays

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Do not put entire focus on just one day (i.e., Thanksgiving Day) remember it is a season of holiday sentiment and activities can be spread out (time-wise) to lessen stress and increase enjoyment.
- Remember the holiday season does not banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely; there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.
- Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future. Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don’t set yourself up in comparing today with the “good ol’ days.”
- Do something for someone else. Try volunteering some time to help others.
- Enjoy activities that are free, such as driving around to look at holiday decorations; going window shopping without buying; **making** a snowperson with children.
- Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.
- Try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- Spend time with supportive and caring people. Reach out and make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from for awhile.

(Continued on Page 4)

Get Your Thoughts Together

- Do research beforehand. Create notes, know the pros and cons of what you are presenting, and do your homework on the subject.
- If necessary, use visual tools or documents that can help your audience understand.
- Be specific, accurate, and honest about the subject. ✱

COMMUNICATE

Positive Communication

Delivery and how you put things can be just as important as what you say. When you answer the phone, speak with the caller, take a message, or end the call, you're representing your company as much as you're representing yourself.

- Watch your pitch. Speak calmly and naturally.
- Slow your speech down. Don't rush through sentences that might become mumbled or jumbled.
- Avoid speaking in a monotone voice.
- Keep your energy and enthusiasm balanced. Don't scare off your caller with your excitement or lack of excitement.
- Be conversational, but not unprofessional. ✱

Communication Tips for Home and Work

Tips for better communication at Home

To keep a relationship strong and healthy, effective communication is a key skill. Communication allows couples to share their thoughts and feelings and engage in healthy problem solving.

The following communication tips can help show you how to better communicate and connect, whether you and your partner have been together for months, years, or decades:

Tip: Take time to be with one another.

It can be easy for life's daily responsibilities and obligations to interfere with the time you allot to your relationship. However, every relationship needs nurturing and attention. Try not to let your busy schedules come between the time you take for intimacy. Set aside at least one hour of private time each day to spend with your spouse. Enjoy it by engaging in a fun activity or even spending some quiet moments together. You can also strengthen your bond by using this time to talk about the highs and lows of your day.

Tip: Talk about the tough stuff at an appropriate time.

Try not to accost your spouse the minute he or she walks in the door from work. Instead, ask your mate for a specific time when you two can discuss an important topic. Choose an appropriate time when you can both give your undivided attention. Before you meet to talk, write down your thoughts so you can keep the conversation on

track. When you come together, share your thoughts and listen to each other for ten minutes, making sure each person has ample time to share feelings. If you need more time, schedule another time to talk about the issue at a later date.

Tip: Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Try to speak your point clearly and directly. Avoid beating around the bush; get right to your point as soon as possible. After you've finished saying your part, listen to what your spouse's reply is. Don't badger and argue over opinions; this is your opportunity to create solutions and problem solve.

Tip: Listen to both sides.

Don't elevate your voice when a disagreement occurs. Stick to a gentle, calm, but firm tone of voice, and only talk about what's most important: Choose your words wisely and tell your partner what you need, why it's important, and what your partner needs to do. Listen to what your partner needs as well, knowing that understanding his or her needs is just as important as you voicing your needs.

Tip: Talk about how you feel. Don't blame.

Share your feelings, rather than accuse the other person. A helpful way to do this is to use "I" statements, instead of "You" statements; for example, say "I'm disappointed that you didn't show up to dinner on time," instead of "You're always ruining dinner by being late." When your spouse doesn't feel blamed, he or she is

(Continued on Page 3)

Communication Tips for Home and Work (Continued from Page 2)

less likely to react defensively, and more likely to listen and think about what's needed to correct the situation.

Tip: Appreciate your differences.

Understanding and accepting your differences can help you appreciate that you may communicate in a different way than your spouse. He may prefer to write about his feelings instead of vocalize them. Or she may prefer to take a walk after a disagreement, and then work on solutions when she returns. Honor these differences, and be creative in accommodating them when solving your problems. When you appreciate the unique communicative style of the other person, you'll be better able to get along and better able to nurture a healthy relationship with your loved one.

Communicating with Your Boss at Work

The special relationship between a boss and an employee is one that can't be overlooked. Your manager is responsible for overseeing your daily responsibilities, monitoring your progress, and evaluating your work performance for the organization. It can often be difficult for a manager to understand what you do from one day to the next unless you communicate these things to him or her. By not taking the time to discuss the issues you're running into that impact your workflow, you run the risk of your boss

interpreting the wrong information that might jeopardize your success.



Below are some tips that can help you create and maintain a relationship with your boss that promotes open and effective communication:

1. Before you talk with your manager, organize your thoughts onto a sheet of paper, so you can be certain you don't miss anything important.
2. Be clear and concise with what you need from your manager.
3. Practice what you're going to say to your boss. You can do this at home, in the shower, or during your commute to work.
4. Use language that doesn't over-promise results or raise red flags.
5. Use "I" statements, while avoiding "You" statements.
6. Avoid discussions with your manager when you're feeling tired, overwhelmed, or emotional. If you have to, take a moment to organize your thoughts and compose yourself.
7. If you are aware an issue might become heated, talk to your boss before the issue becomes emotionally-charged.
8. Pay attention to not just what your boss says, but how he or she responds to your comments. Be an active listener.
9. Repeat what your manager tells you during your conversation to show that you're paying attention to what you're being told.
10. Be mindful of your body language and how your expressions and mannerisms can influence what people think about what you're saying.
11. Avoid being aggressive.
12. Be open and honest.
13. Avoid gossiping or sharing rumors to your boss about other coworkers.
14. Cultivate a positive mindset.
15. Give your boss praise and recognition when he or she makes a decision that supports your needs.
16. Keep the lines of communication open and communicate with your boss without waiting for him or her to come to you. ❄

Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi ©2012

Heading Off Holiday Havoc

"Joy to the World" may be the theme, but a lot of us find this time of year brings more stress than bliss. As we try to meet age-old ideals, we feel pressure to cook the perfect meal and buy the perfect gift.

It's time for Americans -- particularly the women who bear the brunt -- to make more realistic holiday plans, psychologists say.

"It's always legitimate to say 'no,'" says Dorothy Cantor, Ph.D., former president of the American Psychological Association. "People forget that they have that option when the holidays come." Dr. Cantor, a co-author of "Finding Your Voice: A Woman's Guide to Using Self Talk for Fulfilling Relationships, Work and Life", says today's two-income couple has little time to cook, shop or party. Modern demands mean cutting down on holiday hubbub.

"Women need to realize that it's acceptable to delegate some of their responsibilities," says California psychologist Elaine Rodino, Ph.D., who specializes in relationships and stress.

Have a potluck dinner so you don't end up cooking the whole meal yourself. See what you can pick up at your local bakery. Ask dinner guests to help you clean up after the meal.

It's wise to plan ahead and decide how the holidays can be most enjoyable for you and your family -- without holding yourself to artificial norms, Dr. Rodino says. Make plans to flee to a mountain cabin with your family. Feel you're right not to invite relatives if you have a rocky relationship and fear they may spoil the mood. Talk to the family about spending limits on gifts.

"If you're not going to do it joyfully, then don't do it," says Cecile Andrews, Ph.D., author of "The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life." She urges people to make their own choices about how to observe the holidays.

"The holidays are not just about getting presents," Dr. Andrews says. "It's a time of inner growth, finding new insight and meeting your own values." ❄

Krames Staywell

(Holiday Depression... Continued from Page 1)

- Save time for yourself! Recharge your batteries! Let others share responsibility of activities.

Can Environment Be a Factor?

Recent studies show that some people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which results from fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months. Phototherapy, a treatment involving a few hours of exposure to intense light, is effective in relieving depressive symptoms in patients with SAD.

Other studies on the benefits of phototherapy found that exposure to early morning sunlight was effective in relieving seasonal depression. Recent findings, however, suggest that patients respond equally well to phototherapy whether it is scheduled in the early afternoon. This has practical applications for antidepressant treatment since it allows the use of phototherapy in the workplace as well as the home. ❄

*National Mental Health Association (NMHA)
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How to Use Your EAP

When help is needed call 1-800-433-2320. Cascade staff will ask for your name, employer and a brief description of your presenting concern. If an emergency exists you will be given immediate assistance. If your situation is not an emergency, you will be offered telephone assistance and/or in-person sessions to complete an assessment and make a referral for treatment if needed.

Meetings with your counselor are completely confidential. Your employer will not know you have used the EAP. No one will be provided any information about you without your written consent. Exceptions would occur only in the event of you being considered dangerous to yourself or someone else.

At the first appointment you should be prepared to give the counselor some background information to assist in formulating an action plan. Many people find it helpful to prepare a list of things they wish to discuss at each session.

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