

## Tis the Season

It's the season of the year when we look forward to rejoicing in the spirit of the holidays. This joyous season can be a festive time filled with traditional activities, lots of wonderful food, and merriment in gatherings with family and friends. For some of us, it's our favorite time of year and for others it brings mixed emotions.

Seeing old friends and family members may be exciting or may bring up memories of disappointments. Upcoming dinners, parties, shopping, baking, and preparations may cause a great deal of stress even depression or anxiety. These feelings may be worse for those who have experienced divorce, lost a loved one, or live far from relatives.

Some of the holiday angst we experience may partly be self-inflicted because we fear varying from tradition or feel obligated to meeting social expectations. With a little anticipation and a plan, we can alter our reactions. Here are some suggestions:

- Focus on the present. There's something about being with family and old friends that makes us become who we were and not who we are today. If this happens, try to walk away for a minute, remember who you are now, and interact with others who can help ground you.
- Accept change. If you've suffered a loss during the year, consider changing your routine, doing something different, and establishing a new tradition.
- Accept your limitations. Practice saying no. Set realistic expectations for yourself and others in celebrating the holiday. Remember no one has an ideal family or a perfect storybook holiday.
- Keep it simple. Improvise. Delegate or eliminate tasks altogether. Try not to put unreasonable pressure on yourself to be happy, to rejoice, or even to enjoy the holidays. Give yourself a break this holiday season.
- Accept a little help. This is no time to go it alone or to try to control all aspects of everything. It's okay to ask for support from others.
- Pace yourself and prioritize. Develop a plan, make a to-do list, set deadlines, and schedule them on your calendar. This will end the last minute frenzy.
- Be good to yourself. Make time for some activities that pamper you. Listen to music, watch your favorite movie, soak in a hot bath, go for a walk, buy yourself a gift, or take a moment for some quiet time.
- Do things that give meaning to the holidays. Volunteer at a homeless center, visit the elderly at a senior community, engage in spiritual activities, or spend time enjoying the company of those who value you.
- Savor life's little pleasures. Count your blessings. Express caring and gratitude to yourself and others.
- Give the gift of yourself. Have a close friend or family member choose one activity that makes the holiday especially fun or meaningful for them, and do it with that person.

Remember, the holidays only come once a year and last for a few weeks. With an open mind, the willingness to change, and some planning you might just find this year to be less stressful and more joyful. Breathe, laugh, and remind yourself you can rejoice during the holidays.

Have a peaceful holiday season!

The Office of Employee and Organization Development

