

November 1, 1999

EAP News #67

## Don't Let the Holiday Season Stress You Out!

Does just the thought of the holiday season send you into a panic? Do you ask yourself, "How can I get everything done?" The key to staying calm is organization. Starting early will allow you more freedom in your schedule for the fun things. If you wait until the last minute, you are sure to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

The first step in organization is making a list of everything that needs to be done. The list should include cooking, shopping, cleaning, wrapping presents, packing, travel and anything else you can think of. Don't forget to include some fun things that make the holiday season special for you and your family.

Decide which tasks you need to do yourself, what you have time for, and then delegate the rest. It doesn't really matter if the packages aren't wrapped perfect or the laundry wasn't folded just right. Just think of the time you saved by delegating chores. Remember the saying "divide and conquer".

Schedule everything on a master calendar. This way you can check your family's holiday schedule at a glance. With all your activities posted on the calendar, you know in an instant if you are free or not. Just remember to check it before making any plans.

Don't go shopping without your list. Try to plan only one or two shopping trips and get it all out of the way at once. If you know what you're looking for, shopping will go much faster and you will save money too.

If your schedule doesn't go as planned, don't worry. Some things are out of your control, like illness, unexpected guests, etc. Recognize this and move on with your plans.

With a little planning and organization you can have a relaxing and stress-free holiday season that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

## Emotional Health in the Teen Years

Teens who feel like they belong and are valued by their families and schools, are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol and other drug use, violence and sex, say researchers from universities in North Carolina and Minnesota.

Researchers surveyed more than 90,000 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders looking for an influence between a teen's family and peer relationships and risky behaviors. The following is a list of some of the findings.

- ✍ Teens who felt strongly connected to their parents were less likely to experience emotional distress, to be involved in violence, to be sexually active and to become pregnant. Except in the area of pregnancy, the findings were the same for teens that felt connected to their school.
- ✍ Teens with access to guns at home were at greater risk for participation in violence. Also, the availability of alcohol or other drugs in the home increased the likelihood that that the teen would use them.
- ✍ Teens whose parents expressed high expectations for their schoolwork were less likely to engage in risky behavior.
- ✍ Students whose parents expressed disapproval of early sex tended to postpone their first sexual experience.
- ✍ Teens who worked 20 hours or more per week were more likely to experience emotional distress and to use alcohol or other drugs.
- ✍ Teens who reported that religion and prayer were important were less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

Researchers also found that while a parent's presence prevented some risky behaviors, especially alcohol and other drug use, having a parent around was less significant than the teen's feeling warmth and love from the parent.

**STRESS BUSTER:** Learn to say "NO" politely. Know your limits. Superman and Superwoman are fictional charters, not real people.

## Getting The Whole Family To Share The Load

An employed women with an outside work commitment of at least 40 hours a week still spends an average of an additional 26 hours per week on housework. Devising a family plan for housework is a must for any household combining two income-earning adults and family.

### Making a family plan for housework:

1. Be sure that everyone in your family understands that housework is a responsibility for all family members to tackle.
2. Hold a family meeting. Brainstorm on ways to handle chores
3. Be creative. Tasks can be divided up in a variety of ways: You can make a list together; then whoever gets up first on Saturday morning chooses a chore, and whoever wakes up last gets what's left. You can rotate chores, or leave them to the luck of the draw. Family members can choose certain jobs they like best, as long as everyone is satisfied with the division of labor.
4. Include standards and regular evaluations, with consequences if a person doesn't do his or her share or doesn't do it well.
5. Suggestion # 1: Even very small children can be taught to help in numerus ways. Thy can: care for the family pet, take out the garbage, water plants, dust and sweep, set and clear the table, put dirty clothes in the hamper, make beds, keep their rooms clean and organized. Fortunately, younger children like doing chores, so you can easily make a game of it. What starts as fun can become a good habit.
6. Suggestion#2: Whenever possible, make chores fun, or at least less burdensome. Add music; work together as a family; build in a reward of special activity when chores are done. Rocognize improvement as well as excellence. Frequent praise and mutual appreciation will help your system work.

### PASS THE CHIPS

An eight-ounce bag of potato chips contains nearly six tablespoons of vegetable oil and supplies up to 80 grams of fat. For most people, that's more fat than they should get from all the foods they eat in an entire day.

### BETTER SLEEP

Don't use alcohol to induce sleep. A nightcap can lull you to sleep, but alcohol typically produces light, unsettled sleep.

## Five Don'ts To Remember

**Don't forget that you can't read minds.** Assuming that you're a mind reader can lead to upset and conflict both at home and at work. Instead of guessing what someone is thinking, ask "What's on your mind?" You stand a better chance of getting it right.

**Don't forget to take responsibility for your own actions.** Let's say you've had a frustrating day at work. When you come home, something else frustrating happens and you get so worked up you break something. You broke it, not the person or thing that frustrated you, but you. Take responsibility for your actions, especially when those actions are wrong or hurtful.

**Don't forget the importance of self care.** In the hustle and bustle of daily living, we to often forget the most important person in our lives, ourselves. Be nurturing to yourself, like a self parent. Make more time to do things you truly enjoy, and let go of things that aren't as satisfying. You'll find that making time for yourself will benefit other areas in your life.

**Don't forget your friends.** A close friend fills a void in our lives that a relative or co-worker couldn't fill. But nurturing a friendship takes time and energy. Unfortunately, on your path to excelling at work and establishing your own family, you may have let some friendships go by the wayside. Build or maintain a friendship, or two or more, and enjoy.

**Don't forget the importance of good health.** Smoking, using illicit drugs or getting drunk frequently, not wearing a seatbelt, not exercising, eating poorly, all of these activities place you at risk of premature death.

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HBA is your 24-hour employee assistance program. Eligible employees and family members may call for confidential assistance with personal, legal, childcare, financial, alcohol/drug and other problems. HBA has identified a variety of community resources and self help associations. Also available is a panel of professional counselors and hospitals that have agreed to provide free or low cost counseling and treatment services to persons who have been referred by Human Behavior Associates. Dial 1-800-937-7770 for information or assistance.

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